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- April 21-22
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Jean-Pierre & Connie Tadros
Managing Editor :
Teri Coburn (Montreal)
General Manager :
Del Mehes (Toronto)
Subscriptions :
Diane Neboschizkij (Montreal)
Art Direction :
Claire Baron for Graffitexte
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Toronto office:
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Toronto, Ont. M5V 2M9
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IN PROGRESS...

Dressed to kill? Here, Bruce Dern as **Harry Tracy**, with Michael C. Gwynne (right).

Harry Tracy – Desperado

Harry Tracy — Desperado moved into Heritage Park in Calgary for a week of shooting in November. This western starring Bruce Dern, Helen Shaver, Michael Gwynne and Gordon Lightfoot is based on the story of Harry Tracy, the last of the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang. William Graham directed the $8 million Ronald I. Cohen Production — which traversed B.C. and Alberta, moving between twelve locations, from Port Alberni to Long Beach to Cathedral Grove to Victoria to Brittania Beach to Squamish to Mission to Calgary to Canmore to Jasper, and finally, to Barkerville. By the time the production pulled into Calgary, the weeks of working and travelling unusual terrain in uneven weather was beginning to take its toll on the energetic company.

Unit publicist Julia Frittaion faded perceptibly during a telephone conversation, as she fought waves of dizziness. A bug was going through the company, she explained. Bruce Dern was also feeling under the weather that day, and would be unavailable for interviews. A visit to the set revealed the company was gamely carrying on despite its travels and travails.

Heritage Park is a reconstructed turn-of-the-century town located on the banks of the Glenmore Reservoir in south west Calgary. This park, with its tree-lined walkways, restored and transplanted homes, and period train stations, has attracted a number of film and television productions.

However, western film personnel are accustomed to eastern companies breezing into town to shoot a movie, bringing with them everything but the coffee and the horses. It was therefore a pleasant surprise to discover that Vancouver-based Desperado Productions was travelling with an almost totally western cast and crew.

A conversation with casting director Lynne Carrow (a striking young woman with a straightforward, sympathetic air) revealed that the entire cast, with the exception of Dern, Shaver, Gwynne, and Lightfoot, were from B.C. and Alberta.

"I'm from Alberta, so I knew there was talent here that hadn't necessarily been presented before," she said. Carrow was helped in her quest by Bette Chadwick (of The Other Agency Casting Ltd.) in Edmonton, Larry Parish in Calgary, and by the director himself, American William Graham.

"The director was receptive to using unknowns," Carrow reported. And a look at Graham's past history revealed he has opened that first door for many promi-

nent actors; Frederick Forrest, Powers Boothe, Jan Smithers, Tommy Lee Jones, and Bruce Dern himself.

The Albertans cast in principal roles include Frank Turner, Jim DeFelice, Jack Ackroyd, Jim Roberts, Fred Diehl and Dennis Robinson. B.C. actors were cast in the remaining principal roles.

On location the lunch hour had ended, and a walkie-talkie message summoned Carrow to another part of the town. Period-garbed extras lined the street, and horses and carriages rattled past, preparing for the afternoon's work in the crisp winter air. It was a strange combination of electronic gadgets, ski-jackets and toques, riders, handguns, and turn-of-the century matrons.

Set-up for a scene with Bruce Dern and Michael Gwynne (playing the reporter who trails Tracy on his escapades) was in progress in front of the "bank." (This building was apparently constructed especially for the film — in order to be blown up!)

The ski-jackets scurried about on major missions, while the circa 1900 coats and dresses waited patiently against the walls of the corner store, or on the veranda of the stately Wainwright Hotel.

Jim DeFelice was one of those in abeyance on the veranda. Perhaps best known for his work as a screenwriter on **Why Shoot the Teacher?**, DeFelice had recently returned from an engagement as an actor on **Grey Fox**. He pointed out the similarities in the two films, in terms of theme and period, and their overlapping paths in B.C. In **Harry Tracy — Desperado**, DeFelice had "a nice comic role" as the banker. But just then a voice at his shoulder informed him the day's scenes were switched, and he disappeared hastily in search of his script.

In an earlier conversation, Jack Ackroyd revealed that he had been cast as the homesteader Ely Porter, a good dramatic role with a strong scene with Dern. This career coup for Ackroyd (a prominent stage actor), also set some sort of precedent in terms of geography: the company flew Ackroyd to Port Alberni from Calgary for his scene.

When asked if he had encountered any 'geographic' discrimination on the set, he replied: "Heavens, no! People on the set thought I was from California!"

Edmonton actor Dennis Robinson, dressed as a lawman with badge and holstered gun, wandered past, preparing for his first day of shooting as the sheriff of Hell's Gate.

Frank Turner (**Silence of the North, Grey Fox**) Fred Diehl (producer/actor) and Jim Roberts (**McPherson, Death Hunt**, and **Powderheads**) were not on the set that day.

Through the rattle of carriages and clatter of horses, a familiar figure dominated the street intersection where some of the background action was being carefully choreographed. John Scott, head wrangler, surveyed the scene from his horse. Scott, Calgary-based rancher/wrangler/stuntman, is in constant demand for both Canadian and U.S. productions. He had been with the shoot from the beginning, while covering **Grey Fox** and the ill-fated **Pure Escape** with his other wranglers. For **Desperado**, he contributed fifteen wranglers and five drivers. He commented: "It's going to be a good picture."

Cy Barry of the Prop Box, had moved directly from **Touch the Wind** to work as a set dresser on **Desperado.** Barry was cheerfully optimistic on the Alberta film scene, maintaining, "Good things are in the wind."

Meanwhile, carriages and wagons continued to clatter through the streets. The crew and director huddled near the reconstructed bank as walkie-talkies grated instructions from mittened hands across the set. Extras lounged on wooden sidewalks in the cold winter sun. One, dressed like a dandy, was asked if he had a speaking role: "No, a fainting role," replied the bank-teller-to-be.

Occasionally, between blasts of the bullhorn, Dern and Gwynne appeared for another take of their brief scene.

A tally of the cast list was encouraging regarding the use of Alberta personnel: six Alberta actors were cast in principal roles, with twenty-one listed. It was less encouraging for actresses: out of twenty-one roles, only five were for women. The crew list, too, was less encouraging; although new Calgarian Trudy Work (as production secretary) joined Scott, Barry, wranglers and drivers from Alberta.

Could this be the beginning of a trend? A B.C.-based film, employing a primarily western team, with a refreshing absence of the usual geographic discrimination?

In the future, will companies from the west pile onto planes for the east, loaded with cameras, total crew and cast, land in Toronto to film, and, as an afterthought, toss a few bones of extra work to the hungry hordes?

A delicious thought, isn't it?

Linda Kupecek

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461 Church Street · Toronto
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Telephones:
962-0181
962-0182

Harry Tracy – Desperado

p.c. Desperado Productions Inc. (1980) **exec.p.** Sid & Marty Krofft **p.** Ron Cohen **co-p.** Alan Simmonds **d.** William A. Graham **sc.** David Lee Henry **d.o.p.** Allen Daviau **p.design.** Karen Bromley **p.man.** Bob Gray **cont.** Christine Wilson **a.d.** Scott Maitland (1st), Bruce Moriarty (2nd), Bruce Cody (2nd), Chris Whiteside (3rd) **cam.op.** Rod Parkhurst, Kurt Peterson (1st asst.) **focus puller** Theo Eglseder **sd.** Rod Haykin **boom** Omero Pataracchia **unit man.** Keith Large **loc.man.** Gordon Mark, Hagan Deggs **art d.** Michael Bolton, David Davis (1st asst.), Dai Moran (2nd asst.) **set design.** David Jacquest **best boys** Della Johnston Dick Fahlman **set dec.** Jacques Bredette **p.design.apprent.** Jill Stokvis **prop master** Doug Madison **best boy props** Frank Parker **cost.design.** Olga Dimitrov **ward.** Jim Opsal, Veronica Pleuman (asst.) **Dern's. dresser** Marc O'Hara **make-up** Linda Brown, Linda Gill (asst.) **hair** Roger Dalgleish **sp.efx.** John Frazier, Lee Routley (asst.) **key grip** David Humphreys **gaf.** Hal Trussell **crane op.** Ken Rich **wrangler/gang boss** John Scott **wrangler** Reg Glass **construc.man.** Kenny Chang **lead carpt.** Don Gervais **scenic artist** Gunther Bartlik **p.co-ord.** Cathy Howard **p.sec.** Trudy Work **p.a.** John Graham **p.co.** Jak King **asst.acc't.** Susan King **acc't.sec.** Lorraine Baird **cast.** Claire Walker, Lynne Carrow (asst.) **stills** John Shannon **unit pub.** Julia Frittayon **l.p.** Bruce Dern, William Graham, Alan Shaver, Gordon Lightfoot

Chatwill's Verdict

It is 6:00 AM in Dillard, Georgia, and the brightest thing in the sky is Venus, surrounded by millions of slowly fading stars and the quickly approaching sun. This is Rabun County (north east Georgia), high in the Great Smokey Mountains; UFO country according to the locals — and the site this morning of much illuminated activity: vans, generators, winnebagos, production vehicles...all headed for the Chattahoochee Forest for Day One of **Chatwill's Verdict**, an Argosy Film Production directed by William Fruet.

Three hours later, the unit is balanced on the edge of the Tallulah River, the grip and lighting departments (led by Lew Graydon and Scotty Allen respectively) clinging by their toenails to rocks in the middle of the river, reflecting light onto the scene. Charles Braive, the first assistant director has accidentally slipped, dislocated his ankle, and — sin of sins!!! — dumped his walkie-talkie into the drink. Despite all this the first scene, with the star Henry Silva and Leslie Graves, is soon fully covered. By noon the sun is high, the temperature is 80°F and shooting in November suddenly seems a whole lot easier to swallow.

Rabun County, surrounding the city of Clayton, has hosted a number of film productions: **Deliverance, Grizzly** and **The Long Riders** among them. **Chatwill's Verdict** is an action film that brings four hiking college kids into confrontation with a brutal murder deep in the backwoods. The plot thickens when they try to report the incident and the mountain society that turned its back on the killing endeavours to stop them.

Day One wraps with the unit racing up the mountain slopes, searching for sun to match the morning's shooting and wondering, five pages of action coverage per day is tough enough on level ground, but here?...

Ten days later, with executive producer Gene Slott and producer Herb Abramson carefully overseeing, we have had no more injuries, we have tarred and feathered a stunt man, rolled him down a mountain, flipped over his car (on the fifth, death-defying run at it), shot in caves, on cliffs, on boulders in raging rivers and finally, on level ground! The town site of Chatwill is our major set, by art director Fred Allen and his incredible crew of local craftsmen led by the invincible Frank Rickman. The location is an outlying section of Clayton, called Needy Creek, painted and propped and dressed into a perfect backwoods community, complete with an old schoolhouse (now General Store) which was bulldozed out of the mountains and delivered on a flatbed through fifteen miles of switchback roads in five hours!

When we arrive at Atlanta airport with our down parkas, we all feel a bit foolish; but by Day 10, with heavy frost and high winds, November is feeling like it's always felt. Chatwill Village is a joy to work in — a 360° dressed set — and from now on Henry Silva as Chatwill, and Nicholas Campbell as his young opponent, will match wits and come to terms with life and death in the mountains.

In the meantime, the crew will indulge in a steady diet of country fried steak, fried chicken, salt pork and smoked ham, will party at Sky Valley, avoid the City Limits Tavern, re-energize with the multitude of tape machines that thunder into the night, and generally squeeze as much out of 12 hours of daylight to be back home by Christmas. However, judging by the skill and enthusiasm of all the Georgians on the shoot, the offer to "ya'll come back now" will be taken up sooner than we can imagine.

Mark Irwin, csc
(Mark Irwin is director of photography for **Chatwill's Verdict**).

Chatwill's Verdict

p.c. Argosy Films Ltd. (1980) **exec.p.** Herb Abramson **d.** William Fruet **assoc.p./p.man.** Patrick Doyle **p.sec.** Mary Young **acc't.** Jamie Crammond **a.d.(1st)** Charles Brave **cont.** Gillian Richardson **d.o.p.** Mark Irwin **cam.asst. (1st)** Carl Harvey **sd.mix** Ian Hendry **boom** Copy Sidall **gaf.** Douglas (Scotty) Allen **best boy** David Willetts **key grip** Lew Graydon **art d.** Fred Allen, Johnny McFarlane (asst.) **props mas.** Peter Fletcher **set dress.** Richard Allen **construc.man.** Frank Rickman **make-up** Pip Ayotte **ed.** Ralph Brunjes, Michael Fruet (asst.) **l.p.** Henry Silva, Barbara Gordon, Nickolas Campbell, Ralph Benmergui, Gina Dick, Joy Thompson, Jeff Toole, Sam Malkin, Alan Royal, John Rutter, Bill Gribble, Danone Camden, Jere Beery, Wallace Wilkinson, Lloyd Semlar, Stuart Culpepper, Leslie Graves, Kenneth Cannon, Randall Deal, Leonard Flory, Deborah Wind

Alligator Shoes

When **Alligator Shoes** is released sometime in 1981, critics may place it within the nascent genre of raw, loosely scripted features in which non-actors play roles based on their actual personalities and experience. The French film **Simon Barbès ou la vertue**, in which Ingrid Bourgouin portrays herself as an usherette in a Paris porno cinema, was a Critic's Choice at the 1980 Festival of Festivals. **Rude Boy**, starring "Clash" roadie Ray Gange doing his job, has also received critical attention and some popular success. However, Clay Borris, writer, director, and co-producer of **Alligator Shoes**, has been developing this technique with members of his family and friends in his casts and crews for over ten years.

Borris and his long-time friend, partner, and D.O.P., John Phillips, have pioneered what Phillips has described as "organic" filmmaking; that is, constructing a film organically from people's experiences, step-by-step. Their drama, **Rose's House**, is perhaps the best-known example of their method. It's a gritty, unsentimental, and moving portrait of Borris's Acadian mother Rose, re-enacting events of her life running a Cabbagetown rooming house — and it won them the Silver Hugo in Chicago in 1978.

Now, with **Alligator Shoes**, in production in Toronto and the Stirling/Belleville area from November 4 to December 7, Borris and Phillips have broken into features, without compromising either their methods or their continuing commitment to the Borris family saga. The film centres on the struggle of brothers Garry Borris and Clay to keep their working-class family together amidst inner-city pressures and the arrival of their emotionally disturbed aunt, played by Ronalda Jones, from New Brunswick. Miss Jones, whose suicide in the film is based on a real tragedy in the Borris family, is the first professional (though non-ACTRA) actress to appear in a Borris/Phillips production. The alligator shoes of the title appear in the story as a simple, resonant symbol. They're genuine 'classy' shoes, which Garry sees in a flashy window at Bloor and Bay. Outside of Cabbagetown — and definitely beyond his means — they are an appropriate focus for his misguided fantasies of social mobility.

On Wednesday, November 19, they were shooting the major Cabbagetown exteriors, which included a running chase scene down Parliament Street between Winchester and Gerrard. Beforehand, Borris introduced his actors and described the context of the scene. "These guys are the two guys that are gonna be chasing Garry down the street. They are brothers in real life, both boxers...In the film, they're just punks. They're chasing him down the street and then there's a whole pool hall scene we haven't shot yet, there's a big fight that takes place, me and my brother wipe the shit out of them. Because, you know why? The good guys always win (laughter). They get ripped off for a car that he (Garry) sold them, and they get mouthy and dare to call us dumb frogs, and then we beat the shit out of them." One of the boxers added, "They jam us in the muffler." "Damn right," said Borris. "What happens is, he comes out of the hotel, there's two guys chasing him, he runs down the street into the pool hall where his brother's playing pool, and the guys are there, and they're mouthin' off about how they want their money back, and they keep calling them frogs. So finally, the other brother just starts it by beating the shit out of one of them, and they start a big fight, bang bang bang bang, and then (slapping his hands together) they win. The fight scene in the pool hall's not scheduled for another two weeks. We're keeping it as the last scene, in case we get hurt, because we're doing our own stunts."

Outside the Winchester Hotel they prepared to shoot the chase. "I've always wanted to take over Parliament Street," commented Borris. "What a thrill. Even got two cops." (His first film was called **Parliament St.**) Northbound traffic was cut off by the two cops, and the crucial sequence was shot by tracking the runners from a crane dolly loaded on the back of a half-ton pickup. It took a while, and they were losing light, but, as one member of the crew commented, that's O.K. They have been lucky so far, because all the exterior stuff in the city has been under grey conditions, and a little darker won't matter. It reinforces the mood.

photo: Christopher Lowry

Part of the local colour of Parliament Street is Garry Boris, stopping to catch his breath in **Alligator Shoes.**

The only limitation on their use of evening light is the very special lense which they're using to shoot most of the film. It's a new prototype Cook 9-52 m.m. zoom, f. 2.4, which Phillips says is one of about twenty in the world. It is much sharper than a comparable Angenieux, for instance, and that extra sharpness is crucial for them, because they expect to blow the film up to 35 mm for theatrical release.

Alligator Shoes is a very low-budget feature. It will be made for less than $500,000, and even that was hard to find. Phillips explained, "We've suffered, getting this film off the ground (laughing). It almost started several times, at one point it had a budget of over a million dollars...The money fell through...They didn't trust us because we didn't have a feature profit-making record. People respected the films we did, but they didn't make that much money...So we had to do some real fancy footwork to finally put together the money we did." Eventually, they were able to raise the funds on the basis of an initial grant from the Canada Council, because it beat the catch-22 of film financing and gave them the legitimacy of seed money. Phillips explains how they managed it. "They (the C.C.) do have a policy of putting money into low-budget features. If it's a good project which couldn't get done any other way...If it's not a crassly commercial film, if you don't have stars and so on, if they respect the script and what you're trying to do, then they'll help out."

On the set, they're squeezing amazing production value out of their money. For some bird's-eye shots of Garry and Clay emerging from the pool hall, they managed to rent a cherry-picker for a mere $25 an hour. After the sequence was shot, Borris joked with one of his cameramen. "So, you like that shot? Three times, eh, &*°¢*!? Better be worth it; if you blew it it'll be the last thing you blow..." Three of the production assistants got five weeks leave of absence from Sheridan College to work on the entirely non-union film. One of them commented, about not getting paid: "I don't care. It's just great to be working on the film, that's all."

Robert Fulford, editor of *Saturday Night* magazine and a former film critic for the Toronto Star, called **Rose's House** "rough, but unrelenting and sometimes brilliant." Judging from the dedication and vitality in evidence on the set of **Alligator Shoes**, it may surpass that praise, eliminating the technical roughness and sustaining the particular brilliance of other Borris/Phillips "chunks of life".

Christopher Lowry

Alligator Shoes

p.c. Alligator Shoes Production (1980) **p.** John Phillips, Clay Borris **exec.p.** Don Haig, Barry Shapiro **d.** Clay Borris **asst. d.** Dennis Chapman **p. man.** Nick Gray **sc.** Clay Borris **d.o.p.** John Phillips **asst. cam.** John Gundy **3rd a.d.** Colin Brunton **light.** Robert Holmes **best boy** Dave Roberts **sd.** Brian Richmond **boom** Carol McBride **cont.** Barbara Ratz **stills** Anita Olanick **key grip** Mike Ray **pub.** Jack Cunningham **l.p.** Ronalda Jones, Gary Borris, Clay Borris.

Hard Feelings

Leslie: "You're worried about that *snot*, Barbara Holland."
Bernie: "What? Why should I be?"
Leslie: "You really *are* a bastard, Bernie Hergruter. I *hate you*! (Exit Leslie.)
"Background."
"Cut."
"Daryl?"
"Let's do it one more time."
"First positions everybody."

Carl Marotte and Stephanie Miller, who two years ago were Dawson College classmates, are working through Shot 463 of **Hard Feelings**, a $4 million Astral Bellevue Pathé production directed by Daryl Duke, shooting on location at Pointe Claire's John Rennie High School. Marotte and Miller are surrounded by over 60 extras, John Rennie students costumed in khaki trousers, butch cuts, penny loafers, pleated skirts, rolled hairdos, and bobby socks: most of the extras weren't even born in 1963, the period in which the film's action takes place. "C'mon, everybody up. Lots of energy for this one," commands first assistant director Bill Corcoran. Energy is a valuable commodity on a Daryl Duke film, because Duke shoots and re-shoots until he gets it right.

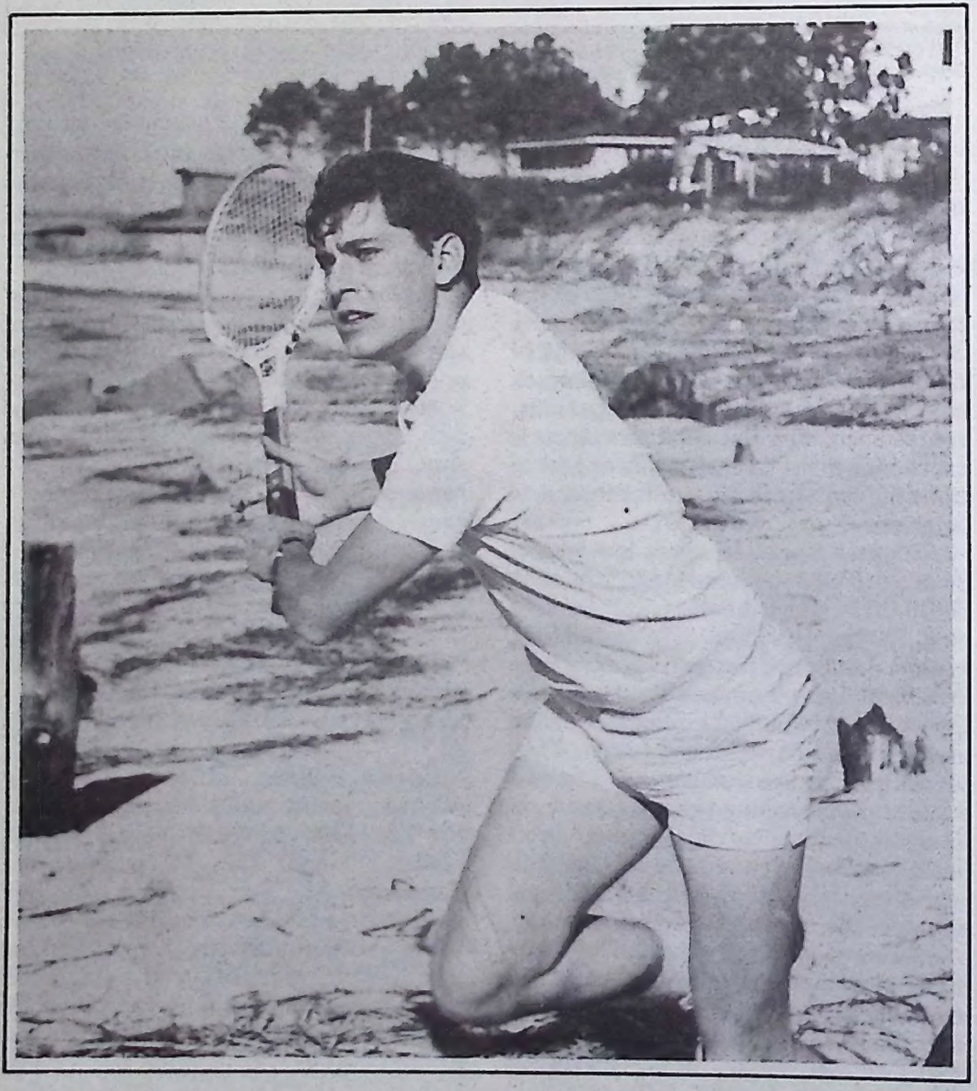
The lean, white-haired, and composed director stands before a row of lockers rehearsing his actors between takes. Carl Marotte as Bernie Hergruter, the film's 16-year-old hero, confronts Leslie Wolstein (Miller), 'the fast girl', the morning after the night before where Carl forgot his condom wrapper in the bedroom of the home where Leslie was babysitting. Working on Miller's American accent and helping to fine-tune her performance, Duke coaxes the tone he wants from his actress as she repeats her line: "That *snot*, Barbara Holland...That snot, **Barb**ara *Holland*...That *snot*, *Bar*bara **Holland**." The two crack up once they get it right.

"Daryl accepts nothing but the best, and I hate any director who accepts mediocrity," says Allan Katz, who plays Bernie's sexually obsessed best friend Lee Bridgman. "Often he'll say one sentence — one word — and right away I know in my mind he was right." Adds Lisa Langlois, who plays Barbara Holland, Bernie's love ideal; "Daryl tells you exactly what he likes. He has a distinct, preconceived idea of how he sees you, and he doesn't want to compromise. This is the first Canadian film I've done where the director has absolute artistic say." Comments Duke, "Artistic control doesn't exist on a piece of paper, but I have (producer) Harold Greenberg's confidence — that's why he hired me."

This afternoon Duke films Shot 463 eleven times: he prints takes six and eleven. "Everything," he says, "the extras, the background, the arrival, the departure, and the performance, has to be right." How does he know when it's right? "I just know. I guess my ability to choose the right shot at the right time is what entitles me to earn a dollar." But Duke can afford to shoot eleven times if he wants: he has structured his scene so that additional shooting will require only one more camera set-up. Apparently, he's not waiting to get it right in the editing room, he intends to get it right now.

The repetitive shooting exasperates some of the crew and the extras, but it's nothing but helpful to Marotte and Miller. Their performances improve with each successive take, as they find the scene's texture and cadence. Miller's parting "I hate you", loud and forced in the early takes, becomes a purring, venomous, infinitely superior understatement by take eleven. "It's just fantastic when everything in a performance comes together," beams a happy Stephanie Miller after the shot. "Acting is fun, you know. It really is fun."

"It's a character story and a tough story, one that doesn't pretty things up, about teenagers talking on the edge of their emotions," says Daryl Duke of **Hard Feelings**. Adapted from the novel of the same name by Don Bredes, it's the bittersweet story of a young man's swift and painful emergence to adulthood on Long Island in 1963, a period Duke describes



Love is the name of the game, and playing for all he's worth is Carl Marotte as Bernie in **Hard Feelings**

as, "The end of American innocence, just before Kennedy's assassination and the emergence of British rock music in America. Before drugs and birth control pills changed high schools forever."

Casting required young but experienced actors, and Duke crisscrossed North America "about five times from mid-September to mid-October," visiting New York, Los Angeles, Vancouver, Denver, Houston, Chicago, Toronto, and Montreal in search of the right performers. Particularly the 'right' Bernie Hergruter, who would have to bear the awesome pressure of appearing in nearly every scene. "It's enough for a 40 or 50-year-old veteran, let alone a young guy," says Duke. "It requires amazing discipline. You have to be on set all the time, and you can't go goofing around with your friends at night." Just as the film depicts Bernie Hergruter's passage into manhood, the production itself may be 21-year-old Carl Marotte's passage into stardom. Director Duke has nothing but praise for his young actor. "Carl is just fabulous, really a fine performer. He has terrific concentration, good looks and sex appeal, range, knowledge of self, voice and confidence. He could be a major star."

Marotte admits the responsibilities of his role to be "more than a physical strain, but an emotional strain as well." How does he handle it? "This sounds corny, but I try not to think about it. I take each day as it comes and try not to deal with the overall situation." He praises the strong script for giving him "a meaty role" as Bernie, whom he describes as, "the universal youth who realizes what being a man is going to be about — that growing up never really stops."

The production initially was scheduled for two-and-a-half weeks of shooting in Atlanta, an actual location in the script, but equipment problems, weather, and the replacement of original D.O.P. Mike Lente with Harry Makin during the second week lengthened the Atlanta stay to six weeks. "I'm glad we stayed," says Duke. "The more it became fall up here, the less we could deal with it, so we kept adding sequences down there." Of Lente's dismissal, Duke explains he wasn't getting "the right look" from the cinematographer, but would not elaborate further than saying, "I would have to take you into the screening room. I would have to get very specific, and unkind."

The Canadian stars of **Hard Feelings**, Carl Marotte, Lisa Langlois, Allan Katz, and Stephanie Miller, are encouraged by the opportunity of a major role. "Daryl had the guts to pick Canadians," says Katz. "He picked people because they were right for the role, not because they were on *Eight Is Enough*." Still, ability and not national origin is what counts on set, and all have respect and high regard for their American co-stars Charlaine Woodard, Vincent Bufano, and Grand Bush. "We're all aspiring young actors, so we identify with each other's plights," says Langlois. "Before, on set, I was always 'The Daughter'. Now, I'm 'The Girlfriend'. I'm having a wonderful time."

Bruce Malloch

Hard Feelings

p.c. Drah Production (Astral) Ltd. (1980) **p.** Harold Greenberg **exec.p.** Joyce Lukon, Joe Wizan **p.exec.** Don Carmody **d.** Daryl Duke **exec.asst.** Victoria Barney **p.man.** David Earl Pamplin **unit man.** Josette Perrotta **loc.man.** François Leclerc **asst.loc./unit** François Sylvestre **acc't** Rejane Boudreau **p.acc't.** Kay Larlham **bookkeeper** Dougal Boone Caron **p.sec.** Luise Massari **asst. to p.** Cindy Morton Rossy **a.d.** Bill Corcoran (1st), Michael Williams (2nd), François Ouimet (3rd) **cont.** Sarah Grahame **cast.(Mtl.)** Helen Robitaille, Duo Casting **cast.(T.O.)** Ali Karnick, Karnick/Armstrong **art d.** Douglas Higgins **art depart. p. asst.** Andy Waxman **financial coord. art depart.** Mary Calia **prop. buyer** Leslie Dizgun **set props** Jacques Chamberland **set dress** Jenepher Hooper, Robert Barbeau (asst.) **cost.** Patty Unger, Christine Gribbon (asst.) Karen Langeshaw (2nd asst.) **make-up/hair superv.** Tom Booth **hairstylist** Benjamin Robin **asst.hair/make-up** Normande Campeau **d.o.p.** Harry Makin **cam.op.** Harald Ortenburg, Neil Seale (1st asst.), Glen McPherson (2nd asst.) **stills** Josh Nefsky **sd.mix** Richard Lightstone **boom** Jim Thompson **gaf.** Dave Usher **best boy** Chuck Hughes **1st elec.** Alex Amyot **key grip** Monty Montgomerie **grip** Jean-Maurice de Ernsted **laborer** Dermot Stoker **craft serv.** Hank Labelle **transp. co-ord.** Rick Disensi **drivers** Michel Coté, Jim Disensi, Rio Libero, Ted Wilson **p.a.** Gail Goldfarb, Heather Elton, Michael Bernardelli **post p. superv.** John McAulay **ed.** Tony Lower **asst.ed.** Bev Neal, Bernie Kershner **p.r.** Suzanne Daningburg, David Novek Associates Inc. **l.p.** Carl Marotte, Allan Katz, Vincent Bufano, Lisa Langlois, Annette McCaffrey, Charlaine Woodard, Grand Bush, Stephanie Miller, Sylvia Llewellyn, Michael Donaghue, Joanne Vannicola, Janice Chaikelson, Tara O'Donnell, Phillip Spensley, Walter Massey, Matt Birman, Cindy Larsen, Mark Walker, Linda Clark, Gershon Resnir, Elton Beckett, Kenny Raskin, Bert Elliott, Randy Patrick, Rita D. Byrd, Larry Kuackenbush, George Nikas Mitch Martin, Chris Read, Bruce Smith, Brian Kaulback, Vlasta Vrana, Johnny Watson, Charles Darden, Malik Purley, Vivian Edwards, Renee Girard, Irene Kessler, Geoff Toole, Kate Trotter, Walker Boone

Key to Credit Abbreviations

p.c. production company **p.** producer/production **d.** director **d.o.p.** director of photography **sc.** script/screenplay **ed.** editing/editor **mus.** music **sd. rec./re-rec.** sound recording/re-recording **a.d.** assistant director **asst.** assistant **loc. man.** location manager **ward.** wardrobe **cost. des.** costume design **set dec.** set decoration **cam. op.** camera operator **elec.** electrician **carp.** carpenter **special efx.** special effects **acct.** accountant **compt.** comptroller **sec.** secretary **l.p.** leading players **pub.** publicity **col.** colour **dist.** distributor.

ERRATUM

In issue No. 71 of Cinema Canada an error appeared on page 39 in the article "Stephen Young – All Things Considered:" Maxine Samuels, and *not* John Trent, was the producer of the *Seaway* series. And in the In Progress report on **Comics** Marty Galin's name was mispelled Balin. Our apologies to all concerned. Ed.

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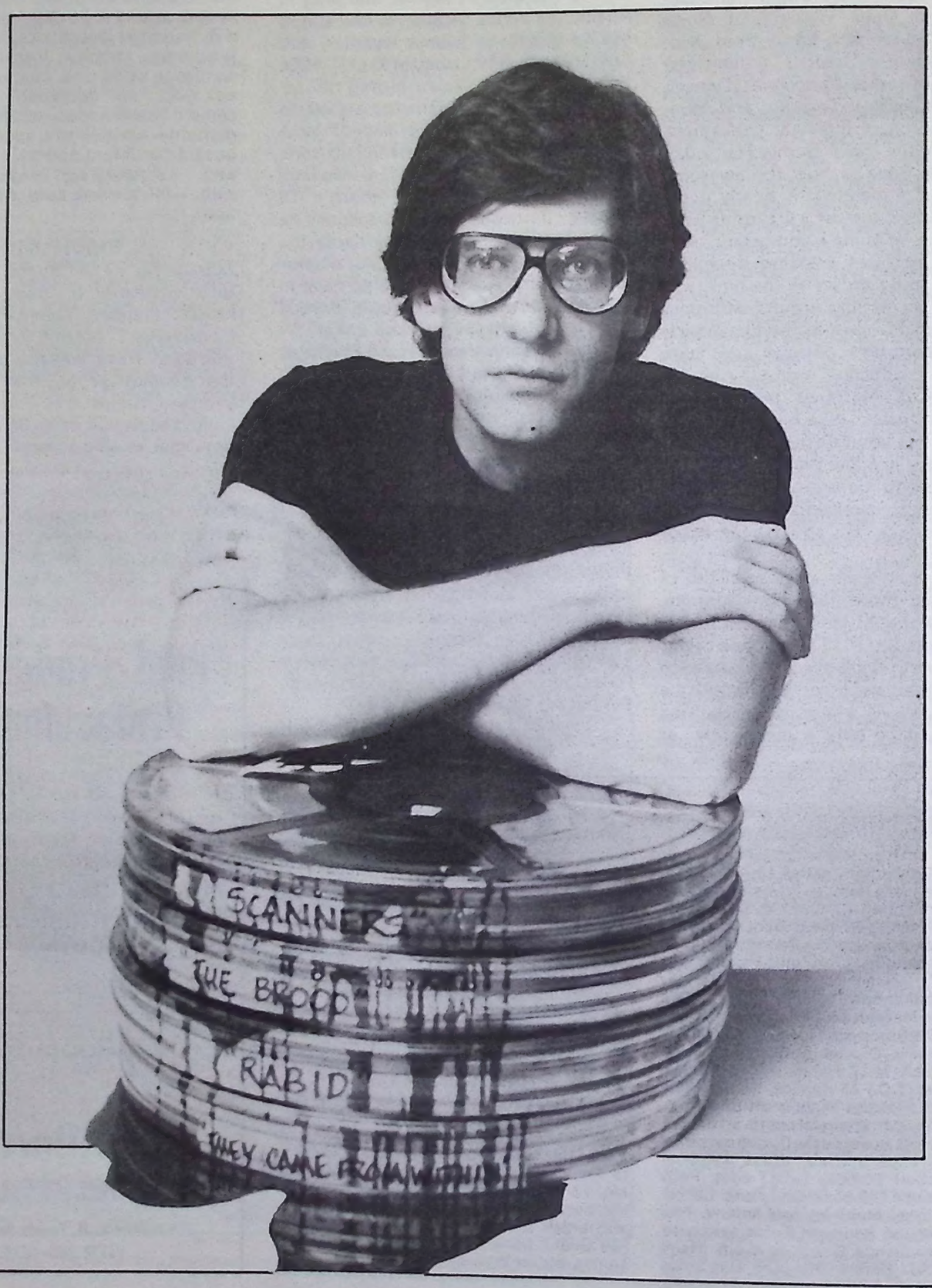
David Cronenberg



The market's heating up for canned goods by Cronenberg

Brilliantly Bizarre

by John G. Harkness

There is more to Cronenberg's films than the blood 'n' gore that turns the stomach. He exploits the implications of modern scientific society to give man a taste of his own worst medicine.

David Cronenberg is a rarity in the English-Canadian cinema – a writer/director whose works are informed by a strikingly personal vision. Despite the impression created by his films, he is not a bloodthirsty ghoul, but rather an intensely articulate artist with a precise sense of what his work is about. It is the thematic content of his films that so upsets the critics; for he is not a filmmaker in love with technique, creating excercises in camera movement that hinge upon the revelation of a convenient psychopath. Rather, he meditates upon death, disease and mortality, telling Frankenstein stories, where the created monster is a form of cancer eating away at our comfortable, cultural worship of physical beauty and intellectual adolescence.

***Scanners**, his latest film, is also his most technically assured (and it should be remembered that in the following interview, when he speaks of a "larger budget," he is referring to about $4.5 million – mere carfare for a Michael Cimino or Francis Coppola). It is also his best released film: its New York opening includes two East Side houses, unlike **The Brood**, which was unceremoniously dumped in Times Square by New World.*

Cinema Canada: *One of the more remarkable things about your work is that there is almost no thematic break between your student/underground films and your commercial work. How do you account for that?*

David Cronenberg: I think it's important that I write my own scripts. It's conceivable that other directors would have more connection between what fascinated them when they started to make films and what they do later, if only they could write. The spectacle of Stanley Kubrick looking at the first ten pages of six hundred novels and throwing them against the wall until he found **The Shining** is sort of pathetic; yet he's admitted that he can't write. Also, some directors are journeymen and don't have any vision or anything to express. All those factors mean the difference between someone whose work shows continuity and someone whose work doesn't. Someone like William Friedkin, who's a very good technical director, has lots of hits, and certainly knows how to get the juice out of his scripts, doesn't have anything you could call the Friedkin sensibility — you'd have to look very hard to see it in his films. I think it's mainly having some sort of vision that translates into film.

Since we're speaking of vision, how do you see your own work developing in thematic and formal terms?

I think I'm coming closer to developing things that obsess me in more naturalistic terms. I suppose it may be strange to think of **Scanners** as naturalistic, but you can see how it is in certain ways more so than **Shivers**, or certainly **Rabid**. Why I should be doing this I don't know.

There are a lot of people who believe in ESP and psychic phenomena, and I find that some people take **Scanners** as not being science fiction. They seem to feel that they are personally on the verge of *being* Scanners; and coming out of the theatre they definitely can scan, if only for a couple of hours.

*It seems to me that **Crimes of the Future**, **Shivers**, and **Rabid** are about the effects of the body on the brain, whereas **The Brood** and **Scanners** reverse the enquiry.*

That's quite interesting, and quite right. I hadn't looked at it that way. I tend to think of myself as a Cartesian these days, although when I read Descartes in university, I certainly didn't find much. I thought he was wonderful, but I also thought he was nuts. He's had the last laugh though, because I keep mentioning him, because one of his explicit concerns was the connection between the mind

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John G. Harkness is the staff reporter for CineMag. *His criticism has appeared in* Cinema Canada, CineFile, *and* The East Villager.

and the body, and the mystery contained therein. There's that Bertrand Russell quote — 'What is the Mind? No Matter. What's Matter? Never mind.' They seem connected, yet they seem to be different; and it is a vital concern to human existence, specifically because of death and disease...

The Dynamic Duo...

Exactly. It's interesting that you point out that shift, because it's a two-way street. Certainly **Scanners** is explicitly about how the mind controls the body, even when it's not its own body. It's also metaphorical in that people can cause disease in other people by generating stress. Employers on employees, or on a film set; some directors like to run a set on hysteria and resentment and power-tripping. It's a stress situation for everybody, and that's how some people generate their energy — but the toll is taken physically. **Scanners** has that metaphorical base as well as the science fiction.

It's interesting that you refer to your work as science fiction.

Scanners is, certainly...

It's been said that most people use science fiction as an excuse for horror.

You could say that of **Alien** — but I think that's a rare example. It was sold as a science fiction film, but everyone knew the space ship was really a castle.

There was even a parasite.

That was *really* familiar — and it burst out of a body! When I read science fiction as a kid there was a split between science fiction and fantasy. I used to prefer fantasy if it didn't get too far from human experience. Science fiction used to be very dry stuff which would project into future social or scientific developments and see what the outcome would be; so you find a lot of writers boasting that they predicted satellites twenty years beforehand, and to me that's not very interesting.

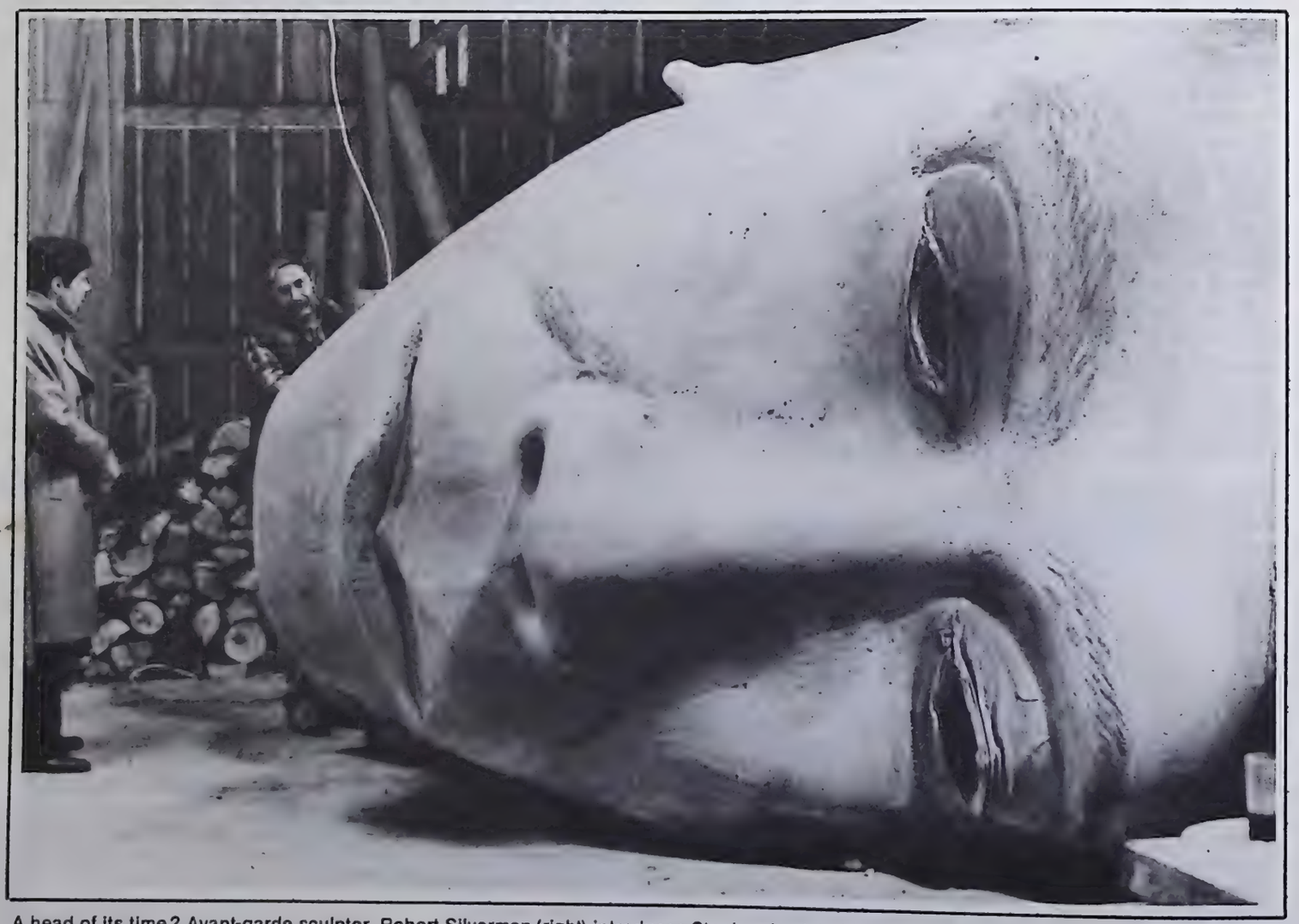
*I think the reference was mainly to film. **Forbidden Planet**, for instance, seems to have a lot in common with **The Brood**. Monsters from the Id...*

They do have a lot in common: without realizing it, I named the school in **The Brood**, the Krell Street School. (Note: The Krells were the extinct race in **Forbidden Planet**.) You do get to the point where, if science is positing life on other planets and your science fiction is going to explore the meeting of us with them, you start to overlap with horror and monsters...

Show the mothers...

Exactly. If life on other planets is bacteria, then who cares, unless they do something interesting. I still think there's a distinction between science fiction and horror, and fantasy, which mixes the two.

Would you describe your work as science fiction edging towards horror?



A head of its time? Avant-garde sculptor, Robert Silverman (right) introduces Stephen Lack to his bizarre studio in **Scanners**

Yes, because I'm not into the occult and witchcraft, which a lot of fantasy is.

How about your style? You seem more comfortable with the technology now...

It takes a while. **Shivers**, first of all, I had no time...

No money, either.

No time is almost equivalent to no money. When people ask me what I get when I have a bigger budget, as I did with **Scanners**, I say more time: the time to experiment a little on the set, and the option to shoot something you know you're going to throw away and then shoot it again. **Scanners** is the first film in which I've actually shot new scenes written during editing, and redone the ending because I wasn't happy with the special effects. It's an incredible luxury to be able to say, "Wouldn't it be great to have a scene where Revok and Keller actually meet and you see them together?" We shot those scenes in Toronto, because the way the film had developed it wasn't obvious that we never had a scene where you saw them together — so their collusion was only verbal; and that isn't a good way to do things on film. That's the main reason my style is evolving, because there is a chance to experiment. Also, I've tried a lot of things in the past and know that they don't work, so I don't have to do them again.

*I was wondering why you move the camera as much as you do in **Scanners**, because **Shivers** and **Rabid** are very static films. Was that a time thing?*

The only film in which I really felt constrained not to move the camera was **Shivers**, because there wasn't a lot of time — unless the floor happened to be amenable to a dolly. I became paralyzed. A dolly shot became a big, big deal, and a crane shot was out of the question.

I went to the symposium with Bertolucci. His version of that was, in the sixties, when everyone was into Godard and the politics of "le travelling," you first had to ponder the *political* implications of the dolly shot. Now, he thinks it's a personal aesthetic question. I don't have a particular aesthetic of camera movement, it's a visceral thing.

*It seems to me that a lot of your style grows out of the corridors at York in **Stereo** and the Starliner Apartments in **Shivers**. You have a very tight frame.*

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Shivers

...Makes Your Flesh Creep!

by Robert MacMillan

The critics were too busy gagging over Cronenberg's early films to take them seriously. Now, with the success of **Scanners** they have finally recognized his talent. By penetrating the hideous surface of **Shivers** (**The Parasite Murders**) Robert MacMillan exposes the film's deeper meanings, to illustrate that there is, in fact, a method to Cronenberg's 'madness' - the themes of his gruesome stories are extentions of modern reality itself.

The plot of David Cronenberg's **Shivers** (also known as **The Parasite Murders** and **They Came From Within**) concerns a self-contained apartment complex (isolated from downtown Montreal on an island) that is invaded by a swarm of crawling parasites. The latter penetrate the bodies of apartment dwellers, endowing most residents with an insatiable lust. Doctor Emil Hobbes, the "creator" of these parasites, wants to restore contact between humanity and physical nature. Some persons die horribly in the ensuing violence. In one scene a young man, sick to the point of vomiting from the parasite inside his body, leans over a balcony railing and retches the blood-smeared creature out, watching as it plops onto the umbrella of an elderly woman far below. The old woman mutters, "poor birdie" while the real culprit squiggles across the ground to the environment from whence it came – an apartment block called Starliner.

All of the foregoing has allegedly embarrassed and frightened audiences and several reviewers. Toronto journalist Clyde Gilmour wrote: "I didn't hear any actual retching at the matinee I attended, but I nearly gagged despite what I had thought was old-pro immunity." Marshall Delaney devoted a scathing editorial to the subject of **Shivers** in *Saturday Night*. The movie was rejected by the pre-selection committee at the Canadian Film Awards, 1975 and last, but not least, the Town Council of Cambridgeshire, England, banned the picture.

So much for notoriety. Let's consider the meaning of **Shivers**: is it artistically successful and morally defensible or not? The fact that anyone who examines this movie must account for its contradictions merely complicates the issue. Most critics, in my opinion, have been thrown off course by trying to force a single meaning onto the narrative. **Shivers** does not pretend to be coherent. Rather it examines arcane or insoluble problems and invites affective, violently negative evaluations through its uncompromising viciousness. To perceive the extent of this hatred ex-

Robert MacMillan writes plays and teaches in the Cinema Studies department at Carleton University.

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After seeing ***The Brood****, a friend of mine remarked that even your long shots are tightly framed; you never see anything in the frame that is irrelevant.*

I get a very strong visceral feel when I look through the camera. That's innate, not conscious. I suppose it has to do with my sense of control. When CinemaScope and split-screen came along — De Palma still talks about it — everyone said that you're going to let the audience make a choice of what they want to watch. I've never approached film that way. To me, it's an artifice, and to pretend that it's something else...The audience will of course be involved. A person's reaction to certain colours is very individual. I want to cut down variants in response, because I think there will be a lot of variants anyway. Perhaps framing tightly — I've never thought of it this way — is a means of control. Film is an abstraction. Each shot is not so much what you use as what you decide to exclude. You are abstracting something from its context and shooting only that.

It also has to do with close-ups and the human face — talking heads. **Scanners** is very much about heads, and very often talking heads. You know, children are fascinated by the human face. They reach out and touch it and are delighted by its every move. One of the most exciting things you can put on the screen is a talking head. When I have one and its doing great stuff and saying great stuff I stay on it.

Bertolucci said — and it explains a lot about how his films work — that he knows nothing about lighting, he leaves that for Vittorio (Storaro), but the one thing he keeps for himself is camera movement. To block a scene, he goes out on the set with his viewfinder and walks around. Then the actors come in and he tells them how to move. I find that incredible because I find it very difficult to gauge the size and interplay and depth of various actors. But it explains why sometimes his camera is going away from people just when you want to see their faces. It's a very possessive thing.

The way I work is to have the actors come out and we block the scene together. I think that if you write your own scripts you feel a little less threatened in terms of your auteurship. You're not afraid to allow the words to dictate everything in certain scenes.

I think that's the reason you find people who are afraid of talking heads. A director then feels that the scene belongs to the writer and the actors. To me, that's a very destructive insecurity.

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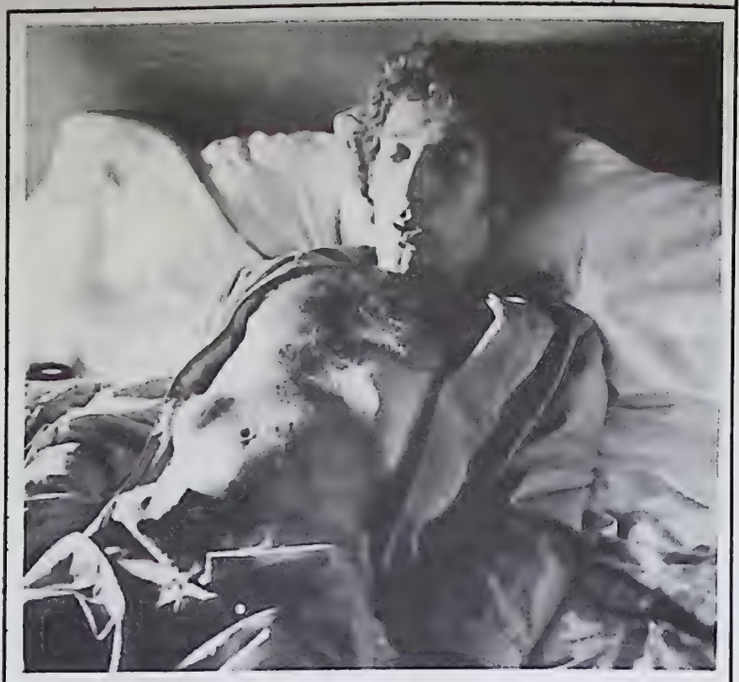

Strange bedfellow... Alan Migicovsky's lumps are alive!

pressed by critics is to recognize the picture's audacity. In the following argument I shall try to illuminate certain aspects of the film, and illustrate the ways in which some critics may have misjudged it.

Reviewers have centered their attack on several factors: craftsmanship, morality, purpose, and meaning. First, the technology: some portions of the soundtrack, particularly the opening scenes (on the prints I have seen), are nearly inaudible. These scenes account for less than two percent of the narrative, hence the general reference by some critics to tackiness seems unwarranted. Possibly, they refer to pacing, to those narrative intervals wherein this movie, unlike its Hollywood counterparts, slows down so that nothing seems to transpire.

For example, the narrative begins with slides depicting the various social benefits of apartment living. These are shot in a non-beguiling fashion so that one can easily mistake satire for lack of enthusiasm. A follow-up sequence involving a security guard ("Never had it out of the holster"), is unimaginatively staged and several scenes of similar flatness occur throughout the picture. But is this a case of incompetence or of intentional tone or mood? Cinephiles who have seen Cronenberg's **Crimes Of The Future** (1969) may recognize this cool manner — a quietness or restraint, the employment of one-dimensional performers and the slow passage of events. In **Shivers** this "Canadian" reserve — a kind of camera shyness and quiet delivery of dialogue — contrasts oddly with the Hollywood brashness supplied by performers Joe Silver (Linsky) and Paul Hampton (Doctor Roger St. Luc). But this diversity of method contributes to the movie's textural richness. The flat scenes seem appropriate because they provide a vivid contrast to Cronenberg's very electric screenplay and they add to the picture's bizarre amorality.

Despite the aforementioned "tackiness," one can also point to a considerable measure of slickness in **Shivers**. Take, for example, the very convincing scene of Nick (Alan Migicovsky) watching several large parasites as they move and bulge *inside his body*. This sort of staging (most of it the work of Hollywood make-up man, Joe Blasco, is of swiss-watch precision. This syntax ("special effects") comes from the popular cinema and is more the *sum total* of its metaphysical technology than a story *about* some metaphysical experience. The sexual awakening of Betts (Barbara Steele), on the other hand, is expressed through a different sort of technical

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To keep from being eaten alive, Joe Silver fights off the parasites.

expertise — in effect, precisely photographed body-language. Her bare feet walking on broken glass, blood stains on the bathroom floor, the slow motion semi-pirouette towards her female lover...all of these indicate her troubled identity. Her humanity is mysteriously questionable and viewers know that something humanly impossible has entered her vagina. Her remote personality coupled with parasite infestation invest her with an unrecognizable reality, to be precise, she is sexually aroused but no longer human.

British reviewers who emphasize the comic ingredients in this movie fail to suggest its crude vulgarity and downright nastiness: Nick retching a parasite onto his wife's pillow while he and she prepare to make love, the thin rope line of blood down a wall and across the laundromat floor, the parasite that crawls up an elderly woman's walking stick, or the sexually aroused man crushing a cherry pastry into his mouth. Conversely, those Canadian critics who saw only violence in the picture, missed the humor. To cite only the obvious instances: Steele's parodic lesbianism while she lounges on a double bed with Susan Petrie, the frequent "medical" lighting that equates food with disease or cleanliness with fear (one example: the eerie glowing light from an open refrigerator door in a dark room). One might mention the "turned-on" canines, the cross-cutting between strangulation and electric toothbrushing, between breakfasting and acid-burning violence, or the suggested parallelism between a dill pickle held by Rollo Linsky (Joe Silver) and the similarly shaped parasites, or even the scene of Nick talking to his parasites.

This comedy/horror ambivalence is introduced in the opening scenes of the narrative. After a short prologue, **Shivers** begins with two simultaneous morning scenes that are intercut, perhaps inexplicably. Both scenes have the character of what one might call slapstick comedy-terror, and their inexplicable relationship to one another – established through deliberate intercutting — seems all the more unsettling. In one, a middle-aged man chases and wrestles with a teenage girl wearing a private-school uniform. In the other, a young couple prepare for the day ahead. The wife busies herself in the kitchen while the camera draws the viewer's attention to hubby's abdominal discomfort and coughing. By this time, one has seen the older man break into the school girl's room, prevent her from escaping through another door, then strangle her and tape her mouth. Obviously a

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With more time and money, do you have more control? Have you been able to do what you wanted to do within schedule and budget limitations?

I have been. I've been lucky, because I've worked with strong producers. Basically, people trusted me, and we've always been able to argue things out, so that when it finally hit the screen, I've been able to say, 'I'm responsible for that.'

But I've never been as involved with the distribution of a film as I am with **Scanners**. Avco-Embassy thinks that **Scanners** will be the biggest moneymaker they've had, and they're behaving accordingly. Bob Rehme of Avco was with New World when they had **Rabid** and he's wanted another of my films since then. They bought **Scanners** in first draft. They sent me the results of sneak previews, asked me what I thought of the ad campaigns. I think it has to do with the fact that I've endured for all these years and have finally begun to develop a following in the States.

I think it's been so slow in the States because you seem to have suffered from both bad reviews and spotty distribution.

Especially with **The Brood**. I was most disappointed with the way **The Brood** was handled in the States. That's one reason we didn't go with New World for **Scanners**.

You've suffered from some of the worst reviews — I put off seeing ***Shivers*** *for a long time after the Marshall Delaney (Robert Fulford) review. How do you react to that sort of criticism?*

Unfortunately, *Saturday Night* has the kind of readership that makes it difficult for you to get financing for your next film. Fulford sounded as if he'd be happy if I never made another film. That he thought it was repulsive, that he thought it was badly done, that he hated it, fine; but to say that this person should be responsible for closing down the Canadian film industry, that to me was irresponsible, hysterical, and nuts.

You get to the point where you like the critics who like your work and dislike the critics who don't. It's not objective but it is emotionally objective. It serves a survival function — why be a masochist? It's different when someone who likes your stuff thinks your latest work isn't very good. In a way, that hurts more than someone who's always hated your work. But when you make a movie, you're

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exposed to literally hundreds of people who tell you what they think. A critic just becomes one more person who's seen your movie and who may or may not be very intelligent, or knowledgeable, or respected, and that helps ease the pain. The difference is that critics write, and are published, and are read — and that's as it should be. But it's really annoying when it keeps someone from seeing the film who would have liked it. That drives you crazy.

Trying to hold on to their sanity, Stephen Lack and Jennifer O'Neill in **Scanners**

I've always been intrigued by the names in your films — you seem to have a gift for them — the Institute for Psychoplasmatics in ***The Brood****, Ephemerol in* ***Scanners****...*

They're very important to me; if I read a script and the names are John Smith and Mary Brown, I automatically start to lose interest. If you are creating an artifice, every part of that artifice contributes to the whole. You can't just say 'Give them any names, the names don't matter,' because the names do matter. Often, a character doesn't come into sharp focus for me until I've found his name. Ephemerol, for instance, just came to me. Part of it was Demerol, and part of it was ephemera, and part of it, though it's spelled differently, is effeminate, a female feel to it, 'cause it's a drug for pregnant ladies. It just sort of felt really right.

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murder scene, yet the motivation is unclear: why *this* man and *that* girl? What could she possibly have done to deserve this end? One's conjectures are abruptly short-circuited by the other obtrusive sequence. Husband Nick examines his stomach (close-up in a mirror). One person has been inexplicably murdered, another seems mysteriously ill. As the narrative progresses, horror is continually undercut by comedy: one consequently fails to learn very much about the old man and why he acts as he does, and Nick remains a disturbing, malevolent young man without biographical or psychological flesh.

Reviewers in several countries have responded with revulsion and anger to **Shivers**' morbid and tasteless character. It is, I assume, intentionally tasteless much in the manner of **Pink Flamingos** (1974), **Texas Chainsaw Massacre** (1974), and **L'eau chaude, L'eau frette** (1976). But then taste is not a prerequisite of art — a fact established in ancient history and reaffirmed by **Les Fauves, Der Blaue Reiter**, and the surrealists, to mention a few modern manifestations. The legless man in **Los Olvidados** (1950) is not tasteful, nor is the chicken-woman in the last scene of **Freaks** (1932), yet they serve a moral and intellectually enlightening end. John Hofsess' distinction (*Maclean's* October 6, 1975) between sensationalism and "shallow" sensationalism underlines this point. **Shivers**' sensationalism, as he suggests, may be intellectually provocative rather than shallow.

One reviewer described the movie as a mere "succession of crude shocks." In fact, the narrative unfolds in a direction from crude to *more complex* shocks: for example, the pushing and shoving strangulation in early scenes with Hobbes and his teenage mistress/patient precede the scene of an elderly lady ("I'm hungry...I'm hungry for love"), who rapes a much younger man; and that precedes a sequence of the same man who punches another to the floor so that a mother can crawl on top of the victim while her female child mounts for a kiss, thereby delivering a parasite to his mouth. Similarly, sexual references increase in number and variety as the story develops. Even the parasitical "disease" undergoes transformation: at first, simply mysterious, it gradually assumes additional medical, then sexual, and eventually socio-psychological characteristics. Perhaps no consistent reading may be made of this, a fact noted by two British critics. But must one regard structural complexity of this sort as mistaken, inept or as incoherent? Perhaps **Shivers** lacks a rational premise; nonetheless, it contains a serious point of view and one that grows out of its structure.

Many reviewers assume that **Shivers** is merely a device for terrifying people and therefore hate it. Granted, some critics may have been terrified, but no evidence has emerged to demonstrate the effect of this picture upon audiences. Given the primitive state of audience-sociology, any number of hypotheses are possible. Let's try the following for example: the creature-parasites are fascinating through their peculiar motivation. On the one hand, these "aphrodisiacs" succeed in transmitting sexual feelings from one human to another and consequently seem purposive. Moreover, they have the capacity to hide, to crawl, to leap into the air, and to maim. Yet, to say that they can "think" seems like stretching it; perhaps because they are so visually unlike "conscious" beings. One reviewer's reference to self- propelled calves' liver demonstrates my point: liver is familiar, but can it really take over a city? In other words, does this movie actually terrify audiences, or rather, feed on the individual viewer's speculative fancies?

By and large, reviewers have ignored the story's clever use of setting. The narrative examines questions of urban environmental determinism, the ways in which social space and individual human anatomies parallel one another. The parasite headed for Betts' vagina emerges from the round orifice of her bathtub drain. And another slug is found by children in the anatomical slit, or mouth, of a common mailbox. The satirical thrust of this seems unmistakable. A crude psychoanalytical interpretation might deal

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with the problem of egress and entry within self-enclosed apartment spaces. The real joke however is more obvious, poking fun at contemporary architecture that is based on social-blockage principles.

A parallel situation was described in Buñuel's **El Angel Exterminador** (1962). Members of the Mexican bourgeoisie are inexplicably trapped in an apartment during a dinner party — although the doors are wide open, they remain rooted to the spot. Society quickly breaks down due to its internal contradictions and, without food and social amenities, these rich socialites are reduced quickly to savages — that which they may have always been. In **Shivers** the apartment-dwellers are trapped by their privacy, in effect isolated from their sensual (bodily) responses, and, in addition, socially separated from Montreal by their oppressive architectural setting. With its own shops, recreation facilities, and private medical clinic, Starliner Tower is a kind of hospital — indeed the clinic may serve as metaphor for the whole environment. Then, without warning, the parasitic disease passes from resident to resident as if providing the missing linkage in this society. Suddenly, one's stranger-neighbors become one's closest friends albeit through excessive and parodic sexual connection. The clinic doctor (St. Luc), as hero, is placed in the comical position of racing to stamp out or halt this increasing neighborliness, some of it tending toward uncontrollable violence. More precisely, one only *assumes* the doctor to be hero. In reality, given his previous inattention to social alienation in the building, he serves as the villain of the piece.

Several reviewers have referred, sometimes angrily, to plagiarism in this picture, as if plagiarism were some kind of cinematic crime and not the lifeblood of cinema history, as, in fact, it is. In any event, **Shivers**' "plagiaristic" analogies with **Invasion Of The Body Snatchers** (1956) and **Night Of The Living Dead** (1968), work for the picture rather than against it. (See:Richard Combs, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1976). Both the Siegel and Romero movies employ the stock device of setting a bizarre event within a relatively normal environment. Conversely, Starliner's milieu (first indicated by a smothering promotional voice over the credits) is sexually and socially abnormal.

Far from borrowing the undigested conventions of other movies, Cronenberg has turned them around. In a peculiar fashion, the parasites represent the intrusion of "norms" into a world of deviant behavior. As the narrative ends, the parasites have all but disappeared. Where did they go? Were they merely images of self-reference created by the performers in this adventure? Writer-director Cronenberg seems ambivalent with respect to the pain/pleasure dialectic he has created. In this regard, Christian Viviani (*Positif*, July/August 1975) claimed that **Shivers** was a subtle parable of sexual taboos. The movie is opposed to the quasi-Freudian pop psychology of Norman O. Brown, but it does not take, as some critics suggest, a hateful position toward sexuality. Rather, sexuality seems like a metaphor for human nature — frightening because it is unfathomable.

A British National Film Theatre brochure of 1977 describes **Shivers** as "agreeably unsettling" with a "nicely subversive humor." But the implied comparison with **Invasion Of The Body Snatchers** does not hold. Cronenberg's picture undertakes more than the undermining of middle-class security; it examines disease and related fears that cross class-differences and class conflict. This is not black humor, but a peculiarly glossy humor – closer to scientific investigation than to satire, or to the humanist context of satire. **Shivers** raises questions about the nature of the universe. Given their anthropocentric view of truth, the humanist critics were bound to be angry.

□

Not moonmen, but technicians in a chemical plant where a powerful mind-altering drug is made

All your films, it seems to me, are essentially Frankenstein movies.

Yes. That's one of the reasons I thought I would do Frankenstein. I realized that of the three or four archetypal horror stories — Frankenstein, Dracula, perhaps Jeckyll and Hyde — I was really closest to Frankenstein. It's the return of what's been created, and also the father/son, man/god connection between those things.

Also, your monsters are so fouled up by what's been done to them...I'm thinking especially of Rose in ***Rabid****, who can't even believe she's a monster. I've always*

→

felt that was an extraordinary ending to ***Rabid.***

Thank you.

Let's talk about your films in relation to other people's work. When ***Shivers*** *and* ***Rabid*** *came out people remarked on the parallels between them and* ***Night of the Living Dead.***

Well, **Stereo** and **Crimes of the Future** were made before **Night of the Living Dead**. Certainly I'd seen it before I did **Shivers**, but that almost made me leave out a scene that looked a little like **Night** — where the people come over the hill.

I'm aware of their presence and I'm influenced by them in an industry sense. I know that people I take the script to are going to think about these other pictures, but that's not the kind of influence you're talking about.

This isn't an accusation of plagiarism.

I'm not insulted. This is part of the criticism game. I'm interested in all kinds of directors and watch all kinds of stuff. I think I'm beyond being influenced in that very germinative sense, because my style and my vision, such as they may be, seem to be innate.

There's no particular filmmaker that I'm obsessed with, because I didn't go to a film school. But I went through that with my writing. For a while, everything I wrote was an imitation of Nabokov. Before that I went through my Evergreen Review period, obsessed with William Burroughs.

It's a phase you go through, and I found it very suffocating. When I got into film I approached it sort of sideways. It wasn't 'I'm going to be a filmmaker.' So what I wanted came out naturally. I didn't study shots, I didn't study **Citizen Kane** and Howard Hawks or John Ford — I didn't know anything about those guys, except that I'd seen all their films; but only as a kid going to the movies, and that's very different.

So Bogdanovich is being suffocated by Ford and Hawks, and De Palma is still being suffocated by what he perceives to be Hitchcock. I feel very fortunate that I haven't had to suffer that on film. I've sort of done it in unpublished writing. When I came to film, I didn't even think of that stuff.

Shades of 1984... Futuristic guards take aim at the enemy

David Cronenberg Filmography

Shorts (1967-1970)
Directed & Scripted

Transfer
From The Drain
The Italian Machine
Secret Weapons
Stereo (65 min.)
Crimes of the Future (65 min.)

Feature Films
Directed and Scripted

1975 – Shivers
1976 – Rabid
1978 – Fast Company
(Co-scripted with Phil Savath & Courtney Smith)
1979 – The Brood
1980 – Scanners

It's been noted that ***The Brood*** *and* ***Kramer vs. Kramer*** *are essentially the same film.*

I've said that, too. It is my version of **Kramer**, and for my money it's a much more realistic version, emotionally, because I've been through that. I hadn't seen **Kramer** until about a week ago, and I was surprised when I saw how untrue **Kramer** is. It's been touted as very realistic, yet emotionally it's a total fiction. I have no qualms about saying that, in a very real way, **The Brood** is a more realistic film. Where is that anger, that rage, that desire to kill? Everyone's so sweet, so compassionate, so understanding. She's on the witness stand and he's saying "No, don't say that about yourself, you're too wonderful." That's bullshit.

After only eighteen months with his father, the kid seems to have no interest in the possibility of living with his mother. Now that is a fiction. The ambivalence of the kid is not portrayed. The reversal at the end, so sweet, that's supposed to be a happy ending in some way, and obviously isn't.

But yes, I did notice the similarities.

OK. It seemed to me that the great undeveloped theme of ***The Fury*** *was the potential for species war. In a way,* ***Scanners*** *is the subtext of the De Palma film.*

In more ways than one, although **Scanners** is really a return to **Stereo**. When I started to make **Scanners**, I chose to ignore the existence of **The Fury**, because I didn't want to stop doing things that I thought I could do, just because they'd been touched on by De Palma.

But I agree with you, though there were a lot of things that bothered me about **The Fury**. It particularly drove me crazy that he'd spend a lot of time setting up some phenomenon and then completely ignore it later. You can play any game by any rules, but once the rules are established you have to follow them. That's one of the reasons the film failed.

What you're talking about is interesting, but they're not really a new species because they've been artificially created...

To a second generation...

But even then, artificially. Only when

Cronenberg checks out one of the dummies hanging around the studio.

the genes start to take over do you call it a true species. Of course, when you're talking about designer genes it becomes a moot point. If the world is half Scanners, even if they've been artificially created, you have to consider them a true species that has to be dealt with.

I think that's a fascinating aspect. There's such a clear-cut gap, an abyss between a normal person and a Scanner. That is one of the reasons I gave the Scanners such extraordinary powers, because a normal person faced with a Scanner feels that he's facing another kind of creature.

What's next?

I can feel my strength growing, but not because I've had to destroy opposition, just that I'm accumulating a track record. It's one thing to come from nowhere, like John Carpenter with **Halloween**, and make a lot of money. I haven't had a film that's done anywhere near what **Halloween** did, and so the other way is to hang in there and if your stuff is any good, you'll get your track record. I suppose I'm still looking for my first film with a major, and I've certainly heard more horror stories about them than about the minors.

I have an idea for my next film, but it's really too soon to talk about it. If what I'm writing now develops, it will be less science fiction and more what people think of as naturalistic, even though it has a very bizarre premise.

Your bizarre premises have come to seem more and more realistic.

And I'm not doing anything about it, the world is doing that. When I did **Shivers** and **Rabid**, any of the medical people we connected with thought it was realistic, not ridiculous. In **Rabid**, they were fascinated by the idea of a graft that could think, that would invent its own solution to certain biological problems. **Scanners** may be totally realistic in five years.

One final question. What's your favorite colour?

For Ferrarri's, red.

(See p.34 for a review of **Scanners**.*)*

For a full critical examination of Cronenberg's work, refer to Mark Chute's "He Came From Within" in **Film Comment** *(March-April, 1980);* **Cinema Canada No. 22** *for a coverage of the* **Shivers** *controversy, No. 58 for reviews of* **The Brood** *and* **Fast Company**, *No. 63 for a piece on the special effects in* **Scanners**; *and* **Cinefantastique**, *Vol. 10 No. 4 (Spring 1981), for an issue devoted to Cronenberg's work.* □

Lack à la Mode

by Lois Siegel

To the surprise of many, actor Stephen Lack has shaken the 'underground' image of his **Montreal Main** and **Rubber Gun** days, to play the lead in **Head On** and **Scanners**. Still, as Lois Siegel discovers, beneath the surface of his recent success the old Stephen Lack is still at home.

Stephen Lack — in a flashback to earlier days and **The Rubber Gun**

Stephen Lack is becoming a legend. Whether he is playing the penny arcade street talker in **Montreal Main**, or the sarcastic, but artistic, social drop-out in **The Rubber Gun** — who enjoys drugs, boys and a little action — he is still Stephen. His rambling monologues brought him immediate audience attention, and led him to "straighter" roles in **Head On** and **Scanners**. Who is this Montreal phenomenon who seems to be telling us about the younger generation just by being himself?

When Stephen Lack was a small child, movies made him cry. Once, he cried so much that he was no longer allowed to attend his neighborhood theatre. **The Wizard of Oz**

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*Lois Siegel teaches film production at Concordia University and John Abbott College in Montreal. She has just completed **Extreme Close-up** – a documentary about multi-handicapped blind people, which was screened at this year's Grierson Seminar – and is presently finishing her first feature film, **A 20th-Century Chocolate Cake**.*

freaked him out. So did **Cinderella**. "This wouldn't happen with today's kids," he explains. "By the age of a year-and-a-half they've already seen a computerized vacuum cleaner."

Lack spent his childhood summers in the States at summer camp. "The Canadian kids at camp knew more about the Americans than they knew about us," he comments. "I used to have a great time inventing stories about how poor we were. I'd say that there was only one television set in Montreal, and me and a couple of my friends would go down to the RCA store and look at the TV through the window; that is, if we could get past all the Indians who were looking at it. And then, every now and then our parents *would* send us a picture of an Indian on a postcard, and we'd say it was the mayor or something like that."

Lack also learned that if you do what you want to do you won't learn a thing. At camp he was forced to do things, and as a result he became good at different activities, and his tastes changed. His interests included studying animals. "I had a collection of the lower phyla: slugs, worms and beetles. My older brother was into insects — high creatures like grasshoppers, but they moved too quickly for me to stare at."

Then, in his usual logical fashion, Lack went from worms to Edgar Allan Poe. "Worms are good for the garden, but people don't like them. I had a fascination for them. I admired their ability to easily frighten — like a Cronenberg. Worms were tools of deterioration," he explains, "as was Poe, who was into the deterioration and recycling of his heros. Gothic horror, guilt and vengeance. These were my early childhood emotions," he smiles. "I haven't got a clue what the other kids were thinking. I just hung out with kids who felt the same way as I did — and they all went mad!..."

Lack developed his monologue style in grade four. "When the kids in my class wanted to take over a baseball field, they used to use me," he admits. "They would send me over to the sixth-graders, and I'd raze them with nonstop verbage, and while I was busy with the sixth-graders, the fourth-graders would take over the bases – a method similar to that used in politics today."

Early traces of the artist appeared in his drawings: "I went on strike from drawing at the age of six-and-a-half. I got mad at my parents, and since they liked my drawings the best, I thought I would hurt them that way. And I watched my first, official, self-destructive gesture. They were horrible pictures because of the sentiment in them — the obvious niceness. But later, in high school, when my work had developed in a more positive direction, I was thrown out of Latin class because I had drawn people twisting in graveyards on my school notebook."

Comic books were a priority during Lack's childhood. General reading — seditious material. He read Carl Bark's *Donald Duck*. "Rumor had it that Uncle Scrooge was modeled after Disney himself," he informs. "And that Disney kept fan mail from Barks — like 20,000 fan letters a year — so that he could keep him at his original salary.

"When I was young I always wanted to grow up to be a real boy — just like my idol Pinnochio, who I think did the best acting job in all of Hollywood. I still don't think I'm a real human being — I'm still on the periphery — adopting certain human poses. Those who know me know I'm not real, but I had nothing to do with that scene in **The Man Who Fell to Earth**."

Then came his days at McGill University, and, believe it or not, he joined a fraternity — Zeta Beta Tau. "They started noticing I was a little different when I kept playing Ray Charles on the jukebox," he admits. At McGill, Lack met Bozo Moyle and Frank Vitale during their pre-**Montreal Main** days. "They both looked like the face my mother drew for me one day and said, 'Don't go near that person,' " he laughs.

Then, at twenty-one, he met Salvador Dali at his Spanish villa. There was a woman there with a fingernail glued to her tooth. Then Dali came strolling in with a silver laurel wreath in his hair. (Hardly abnormal for a man who once gave an entire lecture at an art school with a lambchop on his head.) Perhaps Dali was a moving picture becoming real. From then on, Lack led a very normal life — normal, that is, for Stephen Lack.

It's a summer morning in June, 1980. Lack, in his loft on the St. Lawrence Street Main, is surrounded by his friends — a long-tongued lizard mask wrapped in a leather jacket, with a doll's hand emerging from the pocket; a new set of colored xeroxed works — 'people pictures' — for his next exhibition; a collection of rubber spiders; Peter Brawley, famed actor of **The Rubber Gun**; and a female stripper, who he invited in by saying, "Would you like to come upstairs and get handcuffed in front of my video machine?" As Lack and Brawley talk about movies, Brawley

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quips, in his usual fashion, "The weather got mixed reviews."

Lack then relates the story of his recent and successful move into film — finding his agent, Bill Boyle; or rather, how his agent found him.

"I was in Cannes in '77 pushing **The Rubber Gun**. Bill was in a bar at the Carleton, which is a huge hotel: it was a lot calmer then, but now it's like the Forum after a hockey game. Anyway, I was walking past a table occupied by some big producer and his lady friend. As I passed them, I took the olive out of the martini one of them was drinking and said, 'Oh, a pregnant olive' and then put it back. Bill overheard the joke and remembered me because of it. I met him soon after. Now he wants me to go to Toronto — but Montreal is where it happens for me. I suppose I could go to the market place and hover, but that might kill the demon. People have been quoting that I'm the highest paid actor in Canada — perhaps the highest paid who's still *living* in Canada. There's no team spirit here. Once producers are established one wonders if they will just crawl into the States."

"We're Hollywood's 'B' lot," Brawley inserts.

"American movies," Lack continues, "well, the States are a leading power, so their films reflect this. They know where they're going, so the films have a beginning, a middle and an end, whereas everyone else is busy experiencing. Right now it's movies with a comparative motivation which are getting attention," he explains. "You go home to your old lady, and you don't really want to stare at each other all night so you say, 'Let's stare at the lives of five other people — but not too close — we'll make them really big.' So you go to a movie, like **Kramer vs Kramer**, which is a scientific study. We study the traumas in a relationship within a given situation. Today, we don't have the same family unit. The food's not the same. So we change an element — a divorced husband with a kid — and we watch what happens. We don't have the family structure that we had before, and we don't have an articulated goal. We do have the joys of life, and we are adaptable to change. But people will soon long for the old ideals and, as a result, we will have films glorifying the old standard," he projects. "The '60s reflected self-righteousness — they were films about the lonely hero. Father will again know best in the future."

Lack prefers the Germans — especially Fassbinder. "In American films, rarely does the camera linger on anyone: they are much less excessive than the Germans. Fassbinder's films are filled with close-ups and poses."

Films also reflect what is lacking in our society. "You go to watch a slick commercial film with lavish locations and flamboyantly dressed people. What is royalty anyway? — we can only aspire to it. If you have to go home to a dirt floor, it's not so bad if you know there's a tiled floor somewhere," he explains.

Mentioning **Star Wars**, he explains, "It's an heroic battle between good and evil. Whether you vote for Carter or Reagan, it makes no difference, there's hardly a struggle, and evil is already in – so it doesn't really matter. In school the same person was always elected for class president — someone who campaigned when no one else cared. We voted for him, but we didn't really like the guy. For

A sculpture catches Lack's attention during an extraordinary art show

Every second counts for Lack and O'Neill as they make a run for it in **Scanners**.

photo: Lois Siegel

example, we don't *choose* the cars we buy anymore, because three companies make them all; whereas there used to be 40 different manufacturers. Evil is definitely the progression. We know that what's going to happen next in the world is going to hurt.

"War is needed to advance the economy. Death, cancer, heart attacks...so much of what we do is on the assembly line. It makes no difference whether we eat the hamburger or the cheeseburger – which one is really less carcinogenic? Films give to people what bullfights do — life and death. One of my favorite films is **Rollerball**, where the people are so bored that they go out and shoot trees with ray guns. Basically, we'd rather see people shoot other people with ray guns with a story attached to it. Film is easy to watch. People would like to be active, but they are reduced to a passive role. We have to decide what we want."

But despite the evil, he thinks there still might be hope. "There will always be formula films — scripts which follow a certain pattern — until someone teaches us a better song, or until the audience becomes more sophisticated. Consider television: it's so involving because there's so much action. Television is a tiny radioactive dot which scans across a line. It's moving so quickly that the eye doesn't have to move. If TV had too much content it would be overwhelming, therefore, TV naturally goes for the middle of the road. If the viewer is exhausted, he will turn the machine off and think about it. The producers of TV don't want you to turn the TV off — so they are very subtle on manipulations: Coke commercials sell to young kids — they display young bodies, perfect arms. One commercial is all arms bending — total fetishism — which is the goal of TV — fetishism, rather than heavy emotional experiences. God forbid if a viewer became too emotional and turned the TV off! So you get a few yuks on the Situation Comedies, then a dramatic murder, then the news gives you a story about real murder in another part of the world. Everything is pre-planned. The network shows block off your evenings six months in advance. Then there are programs like *Bonanza* that were really slow, and they were stretched from one half-hour to 90 minutes. We've been taken over by technological products. People have been reduced to eating sugar-covered strawberries in front of the TV. Everyday we create more illusions to tranquilize people." His solution? "Well, it's like **Taxi Driver** — pick an enemy, stalk it, kill it."

Lack, who is always looking ahead, also sees Westerns coming back into vogue. "People can't travel anymore to see the frontier landscape of the West — it's too costly and their horizons have disappeared; and anyway, all you see out West these days are a bunch of Winnebago farms. Westerns are like going back to being 19 while retaining what you know now."

In the future, Lack hopes to continue working with his friends — a group of young filmmakers who got together a small amount of money to make films on their own. Of the old **Rubber Gun** and **Montreal Main** gang, Frank Vitale is living in New York. He's married, has a baby and is shooting very successful documentaries for The March of Dimes. He also teaches film at The School for Visual Arts. Pam Holmes is in Sutton raising little Rainbow, Pierre Robert is selling stereo equipment, Peter Brawley has just acted in a half-hour fiction piece called **Amateurs**, Norma Bailey just won a Palme D'Or at Cannes for an NFB vignette she directed, and Bozo Moyle has finished directing **Times Square** for Robert (**Saturday Night Fever**) Stigwood.

"Now, we're waiting to see if Stigwood finished Bozo," Lack smiles. □

Stephen Lack is having a colour photography (xerography) show at the Idée Gallery on Queen St. in Toronto in mid-March.

Stephen Lack – Filmography

1974 **Montreal Main**
principal lead / co-writer
1977 **L'ange et la femme**
principal lead / co-writer
1978 **The Rubber Gun**
principal lead / co-writer
1979 **Head-On**
principal lead
1980 **Scanners**
principal lead

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Reducing the Risk

by Howard Goldberg

Canadian producers are facing a considerable challenge: how to use the Capital Cost Allowance to build an industry which can move **beyond** the need for tax shelter financing? Astral Bellevue Pathé is Canada's most prolific producer. It makes films for theatre and television, finances them both publicly and privately, and continually tries to reduce the risk to the investor. Using ABP as an example, Howard Goldberg examines the financial complexities of the investor/producer relationship.

With tact equal to the tackiness of the 1980 Genie Awards, a hyper-critical Canadian press pans Canadian performance at Cannes. Many of the 55 English feature films completed for the spring 1980 selling season fail to make international sales or attract distributors. Among the ones which receive distribution few show encouraging box office returns. Early 1980 "Canada Can and Does" industry hype is drowned out by late 1980 "Canada Can't and Won't" investor skepticism. *CineMag* quotes Robert McInnis of Merrill Lynch: "The whole viability of film as an investment is open to question." Yet at year's end, 47 English and 6 French Canadian features finish shooting at a total budget almost equaling the previous year's $205 million expenditure.

How have production companies managed to equal 1979's output when most of their product continues to fail at the box office? Remembering that the film industry is a deal-making industry, and that there are probably as many answers to this question as there are films made, let's have a general look at the conditions under which "movie-money" flows – and flew.

In 1979, almost anyone who had the organization to put together a package that a) looked like it would be certified as a Canadian film, and b) boasted a few big names, could finance a film through public offering[1] or private placement[2] in the securities market. As a matter of government policy, investment in films qualified for a 100% capital cost allowance (CCA).[3] Brokerage firms large and small were willing to deal in film financing, and uninitiated gung-ho investors were ready to risk dollars otherwise headed for government treasuries under this tax shelter. The general abundance of cash and unprecedented volume of production gave the appearance that the Canadian film industry had finally reached a level where it would be a significant force on the international market.

The Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) along with the Canadian Association of Motion Picture Producers (CAMPP) brought us the 1980 Genie Awards, and created the Cannes "Canada Can and Does" slogan, helping to crystallize and promote the impression that the industry had come into its own. This was a calculated risk. Had Canadian films actually found buyers at Cannes the hype would have suddenly hit home, and the amount of money available for future production would have sky-rocketed as everybody tried to get in on a good thing. If purchases of the films were slow, producers could always point to the future promise of North American markets. The industry's overemphasis on the importance of Cannes, combined with its poor performance at the festival and continued sluggishness at North American box offices, frightened potential investors in film and heightened the awareness of risk factors among the more experienced film investors.

If the industry was to maintain its 1979 level of production, producers would

Howard Goldberg is a free-lance writer and filmmaker studying at Concordia University in Montreal.

have to find innovative formulas – formulas calculated to reduce the financial risk to the investor.

In 1980, two production companies and a private film fund offered investors the opportunity to invest in more than one high-budget feature with each purchase of a single unit in an offering. This financing practice, 'cross-collateralization,' is one way of reducing risk to the investor. Cooper-Rosenfeld sold units in **Bells** and **Utilities** under one issue, while Filmplan International sold three films – **Gas**, **The Fright**, and **Comics** – under a single issue. The attractiveness of cross-collateralization is also its prime drawback: while profits from one blockbuster can offset the losses of many turkeys, the chances of investing in a series of hits, and thereby matching the returns which accrue to lucky unitholders of a blockbuster, are slim even for the most professional investment team.

The Seven Arts Fund is a private capital pool managed by experienced personnel from film production and corporate financing.[4] Individual investors purchased units in the fund, which in turn invested large sums in film projects that the management judged to be of highest commercial potential – a sort of 'mutual fund' approach to film investment.

According to its prospectus, when the Seven Arts Fund enters a film project, it seeks a degree of control over that production in order to protect its investment. In other words, the investor (the Seven Arts Fund) acts like a producer. To the extent that the 'Seven Arts producer' is actually a blend of financial and filmmaking expertise its involvement in film projects is calculated to improve the calibre of those films.[5]

Others, like the Ronald I. Cohen group of companies, formed their own financing branches. Cohen's Filmfund Financing stressed the track records of **Running**[6] and **Middle Age Crazy**,[7] in order to attract cash for **Ticket to Heaven** and **Harry Tracy – Desperado**.

In 1980 many projects failed to get off the ground because they could not find brokerage firms willing to sell their units. Inadequate script development and preproduction, coupled with a lack of marketing strategy, made brokers hesitate to back these projects. Those producers affected couldn't convince the financiers that their companies were strong enough to guarantee successful completion of a marketable product. Giants like Greenshields and Merrill Lynch edited themselves out of the picture. Smaller firms became increasingly discriminating as they gained experience and expertise, their reputations affected by each film handled. Consequently, they looked more carefully at a package before accepting it: How strong is the company which is doing the film? What's its track record? Is the film marketable? Is there an advance distribution agreement? In short, brokerage firms were beginning to anticipate the obvious questions which every investor ought to ask before sinking five or ten thousand dollars in a film unit.

Because of their financial orientation, brokers found it relatively easy to evaluate the industrial aspects of the production companies, to analyse their corporate structure, their relationships to distribution companies and theatre outlets, their credit rating with major financial institutions and the rest. When it came to the artistic aspects of the film – the strength of the script, the talent of the cast and crew – they were in large part dependent upon the evaluations of the producers with whom they were dealing. Many of these producers were still learning what would (or could not) constitute an artistically and commercially successful film.

The upshot was that companies whose corporate structure seemed sound did relatively well in selling units in 1980: less established companies did less well.

By year-end, the investors' verdict was in. Over $40 million worth of units remained unsold; film was no longer perceived as a good investment deal, despite its tax shelter advantage. Did the individual investors distinguish between a strong production company and a weak one? Between a commercial film and one which would die at the box office? According to André Lamy, executive director of the Canadian Film Development Corporation, and other industry analysts, the sale of units at the 1980 year-end bore little relation to the artistic or commercial merits of the individual films. Projections for investments in 1981 were gloomy indeed.

Harold Greenberg, president of Astral Bellevue Pathé (ABP, or simply 'Astral') has produced or co-produced 12 films in the past 4 years which are now in post-production or distribution. A total of seven ABP films in distribution represents an investment of $18 million. The 'Producer's Gross'[8] received to date on these seven is $8 million, or 45% of what was spent to complete the films. The actual return to unitholders would be

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TABLE 1 *

FILM	Year Produced	Year Released	Production Costs	Producer's Gross Received	Producer's Gross Contracted	Producer's Gross Total
The Neptune Factor	1972	1973	$1,808,000	$1,824,000	—	$1,824,000
The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane	1976	1977	1,153,000	1,313,000	$277,000(1)	1,590,000
Rituals	1977	1978	675,000	312,000	49,000(1)	361,000
In Praise of Older Women	1977	1978	1,425,000	775,000	—	775,000
A Man Called Intrepid	1978	1979	3,875,000	1,020,000	650,000(1)	1,670,000
City on Fire	1978	1979	4,415,000	1,733,000	2,641,000(2)	4,374,000
Deathship	1979	1980	4,577,000	1,130,000	426,000(3)	1,556,000
Terror Train	1979	1980	2,700,000	—	—	—

Notes:

1. Amounts not yet received are from theatrical and television distribution contracts in Canada and various foreign countries.
2. Amounts not yet received are as follows:

CBS (US Network TV)	$2,401,000
Time Life Films (US Syndication	209,000
Foreign (Theatrical various)	31,000
	$2,641,000

3. Amounts not yet received include $318,000 for US TV Syndication and $108,000 for various foreign countries.
4. Terror Train was released in October, 1980 in the United States by Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation and in Canada by Astral Films Ltd. Due to normal reporting delays, Producer's Gross to date is not yet available.

* Reprinted from the prospectus for **Hot Touch**, Nov. 3, 1980.

considerably less than 45% because deduction of any deferred payments is calculated before distribution of returns to unitholders. (A detailed breakdown of Producer's Gross for each Astral film as of Nov. 3 1980, is provided in Table 1.) Within a larger context, these figures are not surprising; a random sampling of Canadian features produced since 1976 would yield similar figures.

What is surprising is that, despite its track record, ABP is quickly emerging as Canada's largest private producer of theatrical features and television programming. The adage, "You're only as good as (the profitability) of your last film," often times applied to directors, actresses and actors, doesn't seem to apply in Astral's case.

By examining the ways in which a leading company like Astral has weathered the storms of the Canadian film industry, we may come to a better understanding of the delicate and complex relationships between financing, marketing and film production. Understanding these relationships may well increase the chances of building a non-subsidized, prolific, and commercial Canadian film industry of international stature.

Before undertaking a production, a producer must consider the various methods of financing the project. Usually the choice is between public offering or private placement of the film. Not only is the decision regarding public offering / private placement important, the relative timing of the offer or placement is crucial. An offer or placement sold *before* the beginning of principal photography greatly reduces the need for costly interim financing (bridge financing)[9]; an offer / placement made *after* the beginning of principal photography increases interim financing requirements in proportion to the project's stage of completion.

Greenberg prefers private placement to the public prospectus because "there are fewer people involved, fewer legal fees to absorb, and lower interim financing costs because the placement is usually made in an early stage of the project." The last time Astral arranged private financing on a major-budget feature was in late 1978 for the 1979 production **Crunch**[10] (total budget $2.5 million).

Investors in **Crunch** have yet to see any returns, because **Crunch** hasn't been released for distribution. "**Crunch**" said Greenberg, "was produced with the **Animal House / Meatballs** market in mind. This market doesn't exist anymore. We've decided, and this is where experience comes in, to hold back awhile, re-design our marketing plan for the film so it will have a more enthusiastic reception when it is released." This delay between production and release, based on sound reasoning, did little to inspire confidence in would-be big-money investors, and may have decreased Astral's ability to secure private financing on later features. "Costs have risen," laments Greenberg "We simply cannot find a group of 25 investors willing to invest a total of four or five million dollars. Therefore, in the future, most of our financing will have to be done via the prospectus route."[11]

Confronted by the high risk factors which stem from the unpredictability of audience acceptance of a film (e.g. the **Crunch** situation), ABP has organized and continues to organize a business structure which reduces the risk to film investors and is geared towards the "mass production of programming minutes (television and theatrical features).

Astral's integrated structure generates a sizable proportion of its own interim financing requirements and facilitates the acquisition of additional interim financing from external sources. In the case of its recent production **Hot Touch**, this interim financing allowed the company to complete principal photography and to secure an advance distribution agreement with 20th Century-Fox before going to the public to sell units in the film. A nearly completed film with U.S. distribution goes a long way towards diminishing the importance of the company's pre-

vious track record of returns to investors.

The remainder of this article presents a detailed examination of the Astral Bellevue Pathé corporate structure, using **Hot Touch** as an example of how this structure works.

Astral Bellevue Pathé is always the first to tell you that it is "Canada's largest, fully-integrated motion picture organization... Where Canadian films come together." (See the corporate structure chart to get a picture of that "integration".)

When Greenberg undertakes a particular film project he employs the resources of many subsidiaries and affiliated companies. As president of Astral Film Productions Ltd. (AFPL), and as executive producer or sometimes co-executive producer, Greenberg works with AFPL's Creative Development Department[12] to finalize negotiations for the script rights. He also begins looking for an American distributor for the film ; a must if he hopes to attract public investment. Concurrently, he is at work with AFPL's Finance Department examining avenues of interim financing for the film. AFPL's line producer, Don Carmody, independently assembles a production crew. During shooting, Astral Photo or Angreen Photo retail supply Polaroid and 35 mm still film stock. Both during and after shooting, Bellevue Pathé laboratories provide processing services, and Pathé Sound provides services contributing to the final mix. Finally, Astral Films Ltd. (AFL) handles Canadian distribution of the finished product.

According to ABP's 1980 annual report to stockholders, "fees in respect of services to productions have been taken into revenues as received from the production companies. Generally, these fees are not paid until a film is substantially completed and it is clear that funding is adequate to cover all production liabilities." One of Astral's 1980 features now in post-production – Roger Vadim's **Hot Touch** (working titles **French Kiss**, **The Art of Deceit** and **A Stroke of Luck**) – clearly illustrates the extent of Astral's "self-film financing" capability, and the enormous importance of this to bankers and, in turn, to investors.

Reference to Table 2 shows that AFPL and its affiliated companies provided a total of $478,000 worth of services to **Hot Touch**, or 11.3% of the $4,224,000 projected cost of production. By assigning a lower priority to the payment of liabilities to ABP affiliated companies, Astral is able to finance up to the equivalent of 11.3% of a $4,224,000 production requirement in services. This figure of 11.3% is not only important to the extent that it reflects Astral's "in house" ability to produce films, but also to the extent that banking institutions consider it a contributing proportion of ABP's share of the risk.

While it is conceivable that a banker when approached for an interim financing loan, might not be able to distinguish between a good and a bad script, it is inconceivable that he would not be able to understand the competitive advantage of an integrated corporate structure.

Parent to the film company producing **Hot Touch**, F.K. Productions, is AFPL. Parent to AFPL is ABP. The importance of this "integrated" structure cannot be underestimated. The bank is assured that F.K. Productions is not a fly-by-night operation. Its performance will reflect upon the overall credit reputation of ABP, therefore the bank is reasonably sure that ABP will do everything in its power to complete and distribute the film. If the amount the banks are willing to loan directly to the film falls short of interim financing needs, either AFPL or ABP can also borrow from the bank (each parent having successively more diversified sources of revenue and thus better credit) and in turn lend to the individual film production until the difference is made up.

One month after shooting began on **Hot Touch** F.K. Productions secured a loan commitment from two Canadian chartered banks for a total of $2.5 million. One of the terms of the commitment was that the principal and interest on any advances had to be repaid from the proceeds of a prospectus by Feb. 28, 1981. If by that time sale of units of **Hot Touch** had not generated sufficient funds, the bank would be treated as an equity holder in the film, collecting its loan from "Net Revenue"[13] on a pro rata basis with unitholders.

It is easy to see that in going ahead with the production of **Hot Touch** Astral took a sizable risk : if by Feb. 28, 1981 prospectus sales of the film had not generated enough cash to repay the bank advances to the production company (up to $2.5 million) Astral's ability to finance future films with the same banks at the same terms would be adversely affected.

But couldn't AFPL have minimized bridge financing requirements through the public offering of **Hot Touch** before

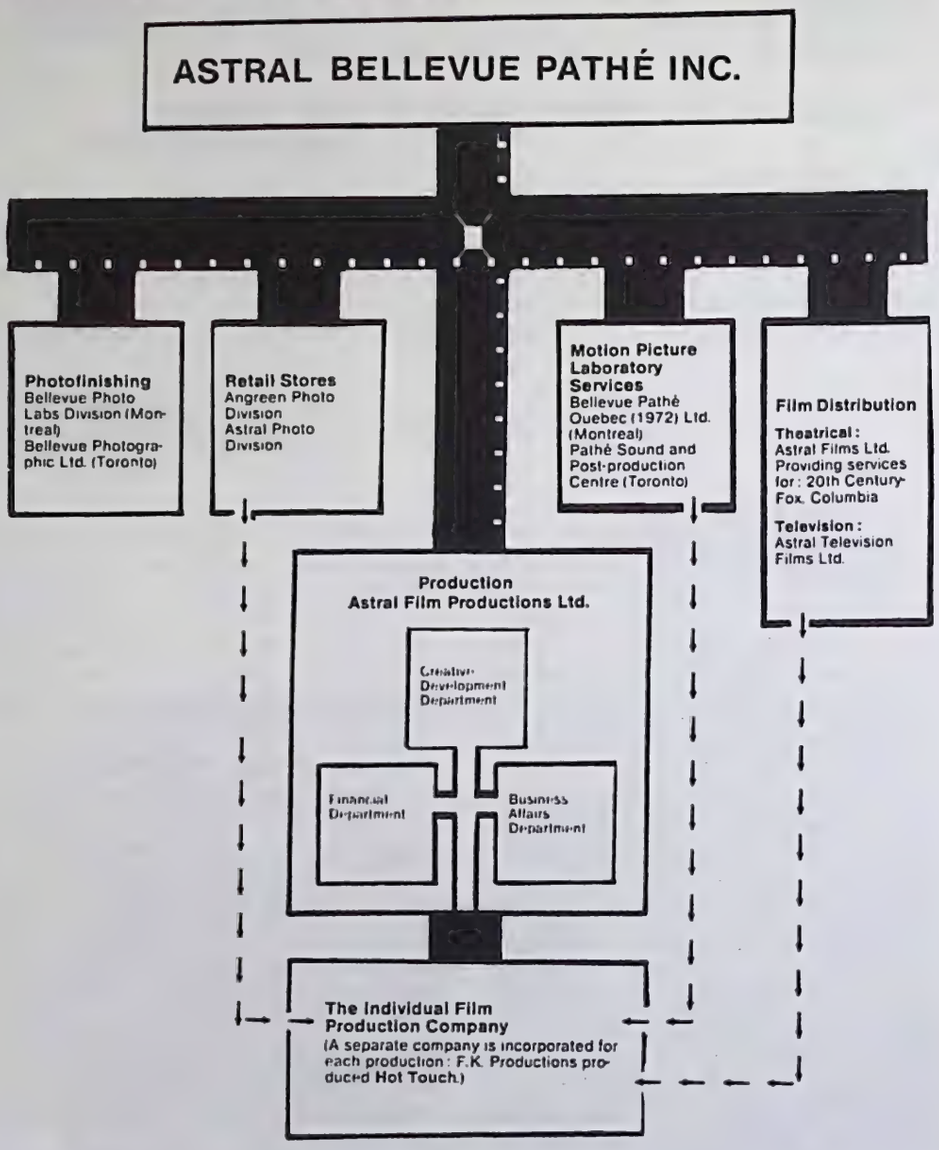
Table 2

The following is a list of the estimated costs of services provided to F.K. Productions by its parent company AFPL and affiliates. The estimates, by F.K. Productions are as stated in the prospectus entitled "A Stroke of Luck" (one of the working titles of the film **Hot touch**) issued by Emptor Corporate Ventures Ltd. Projected cost of production of the film was $4,224,000.

According to Astral Bellevue Pathé's 1980 annual report to shareholders, "fees in respect of services to productions [provided by ABP and its affiliates]... generally are not paid until a film is substantially completed and it is clear that funding is adequate to cover all production liabilities."

Service	Budgeted Cost	ABP Affiliate Providing Service
Mr. Greenberg, co-executive producer	$150,000	AFPL
Administrative	50,000	AFPL
Processing laboratory & Sound mixing	206,500	Bellevue Laboratories Pathé Sound
Loan	72,000 (interest)	AFPL and affiliated companies
Total budgeted cost of services provided by ABP affiliates	$478,000	

The man at the top of it all is ABP President, Harold Greenberg



shooting started?

A prospectus constituting a public offering is a sizable work of 'legal art'. Securities commissions regulations oblige producers to spend as much (if not more) on a prospectus as they would normally spend on a script! In the case of **Hot Touch** AFPL spent $210,000 acquiring rights to the Jean-Yves Pitoun story, and $200,000 on the prospectus, agent's fee and legal and escrow agent.

A producer will want to maximize his chances of selling units in his film, and minimize the risk that the issue won't sell, before going through the expense, trouble, and waiting period involved in the sale of a public issue. If Greenberg had planned to finance **Hot Touch** through public sales before shooting, the discriminating investor would have been confronted with the Astral track record of films which have not yet recouped their investment, and the absence of an advance distribution agreement with a U.S. major. In short, an offering of **Hot Touch** by prospectus before shooting began, would not have been very attractive to investors.

Instead of going public before shooting, Astral accepted the risk inherent in utilizing the bank's $2.5 million line of credit, and went about minimizing that risk by structuring a public offering with strong competitive advantages.

Public offering of **Hot Touch** was made on a "revolving closing" basis. In a revolving closing, completion of the film and the public offering are not contingent on the sale of a minimum number of units. In effect, the production company guarantees the purchase of all units not bought by the public via prospectus. Investors interpret a production company's willingness to assume an equity position in the film as an indication of the company's confidence in the commercial viability of the film. The attractiveness of a film to an investor increases with the production company's financial commitment to holding an equity position.

In the case of **Hot Touch**, work on the film continued (continues) regardless of sales of units, thanks to advances as required to F.K. Productions by the parent company AFPL, and its affiliates. This means that with the public offering of **Hot Touch**, ABP committed itself to providing the difference (if necessary) in cash or services between the $4,224,000 total cost of production and the $2.5 million bank loan to the production. This difference amounts to $1,724,000 or 41% of the total cost of production. This is a solid commitment that has great importance to public investors. Herein lies one of ABP's competitive advantages.

It is difficult to ascertain the actual dollar amount that AFPL and its affiliates loan to F.K. Productions because this amount varies according to ongoing public sales of **Hot Touch** and ongoing cash requirements to complete the film. Before going public, F.K. Productions incurred costs of $3.3 million advancing **Hot Touch** well beyond completion of principal photography and into post-production. While $2.5 million came from the banks, the remaining $800,000 represented a combination of a) services provided by ABP affiliated companies b) loans by ABP and its affiliates to F.K. Productions, and c) accounts payable to external (non-affiliated) companies. "Internal bridge financing distinguishes AFPL from other less integrated production companies," says Greenberg.

The ability to generate internal bridge financing afforded Astral the luxury of actually shooting the whole film before

going public. With principal photography completed, Greenberg secured an advance distribution agreement with 20th Century-Fox and finally initiated public sale of the film by prospectus. The reality of a nearly completed film with name actors and actresses, a director with a history of memorable films to his credit, an advance distribution agreement with Fox, and a commitment to complete the film regardless of the progress of sales by prospectus, is a good deal the wariest investor recognizes; an achievement which does much to reduce the relevance of ABP's track record of return to investors. ABP and banking institutions shouldered the risk until the production was close enough to completion to be of interest to investors in a highly competitive buyers' market.

By mid-January 1981, after two-and-a-half months of public sales, at least two-thirds of the ownership units of **Hot Touch** had been sold to the public. This sale represents roughly $2,800,000 to F.K. Productions – enough to repay the $2.5 million bank advance with interest, but not yet enough to repay the loans to the production by AFPL and its affiliates. Because demand for tax shelter investments is low the first six months of the year, sales of **Hot Touch** are not likely to improve significantly. If sales of the issue fail to generate sufficient revenue, according to terms outlined in the prospectus AFPL and the affiliates which advanced money to the production will assume an equity position. That is, they will be treated as if they had purchased units in the film for the amount of those unpaid advances.

Although no breakdown indicating the proportion of advances to productions by each affiliated company is available, we may presume that ABP reduces the risk it incurs with each advance to a production by loaning only from those affiliates most able to secure lines of credit from financial institutions at the best possible terms, and those most able to withstand a loss in the same fiscal year.

"It is difficult for us to provide internal bridge financing on a constant basis because this requires a great deal of money," says Greenberg. "We can do maybe one picture each year this way... In the future, Astral will not undertake production responsibilities on any motion picture unless there is an advance distribution agreement with a U.S. major." Given the significance of advance distribution agreements to the investor, this new Astral policy may make it easier for them to go public with a film in earlier stages of production and reduce the extent of their internal bridge financing activity.

In summary, the extent of banking support to F.K. Productions was influenced positively by its corporate relationship with the rest of ABP. Astral reduced the risk to the film investor by offering the investor a nearly completed film along with a commitment to complete the film as scheduled regardless of sales of units in the film. They were able to do this thanks to an integrated structure which a) provided services contributing to the successful completion of the film on a "buy now, pay later" basis, b) loaned funds from financially stronger affiliated companies to F.K. Productions, c) shared the risk inherent in film production with banks and later, public investors.

Having successfully financed and completed 12 films in four years, Harold Greenberg has shown he is capable of taking a script to the screen. Nevertheless, "We've made mistakes in the past," he says. "We've gone ahead with films that perhaps should not have been made. This is a learning process. We learn from our mistakes."

Greenberg is not alone among producers. Many will admit, in retrospect, that too many films were made in the late seventies without adequate preparation; films which had little chance of making their money back.

Those films were made because of the capital cost allowance, offered by the government to promote the industry. Now, the goodwill investors held towards producers in 1978 has all but expired. The track record of returns from finished films has not been good. Only a few can point to even partial returns.

Aware of the need to reduce the risk to investors, producers have made corporate moves, trying to find the formulas which might insure continuous production. The multiple deals, the mutual fund approach, the willingness of a production to hold an equity position are all elements of these new approaches. But even the most solid corporate posture can only go so far in reducing the risk and attracting public investment. Eventually, the film must return the investment. "No one wants to lose money with a tax shelter," comments one investment counsellor. "You don't spend a dollar to save sixty cents," echoes another.

From a corporate point of view, Astral Bellevue Pathé is the strongest company engaged in film production in Canada. It has structured its many films differently, and continues to search for the formula which will allow it to continue steady production. Yet its track record has not yet created the investor confidence which would allow it to return time and again to the same investors.

If many suggest that Astral, because of its corporate size and structure, has the best chances of emerging as Canada's most prolific production company, then the challenges it meets are critical. Astral, like the rest of the producers, is in need of a few box-office hits, capable of making good returns to investors and shoring up public confidence that the Canadian film industry can and will still make good films.

Time is running short. The capital cost allowance is not forever, and far-sighted producers need to gather strength before it is withdrawn. If track records do not improve, companies will be forced to decrease production volume or enter into increasing numbers of co-productions with non-Canadian companies. The catch is that these co-productions are only attractive to foreigners because of the ability of Canadian producers to raise tax shelter money.

Predictions are hazardous: with Canadian pay TV just around the corner, the demand for Canadian feature film programming will see a dramatic increase. The challenge facing Canadian producers is to translate this new demand into increased investor confidence, and to maintain this confidence by supplying a film product whose quality speaks for itself. □

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FOOTNOTES

1. In a public offering of a film, the film is sold in units, each unit representing a proportion of ownership of the film. For example, a film budgeted at $5 million may be divided into 500 units selling at $10,000/unit. These units are sold by prospectus. The prospectus is a legal document containing a minimum set of disclosures as require by the various provincial securities commissions.

2. In private placement there is a limit placed on the number of individuals who may purchase shares of the operation being financed. In Quebec, this limit is 25 individuals. For example, a film budgeted at $5 million could be offered privately in 25 shares selling at $200,000 each. Because private placement shares are not sold by prospectus, public disclosures are not required.

3. The Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) plan is a Federal tax incentive program whereby investors in films which have earned Canadian certification are permitted to deduct up to 100% of their investment when calculating their annual income.

4. Claude Giroux, producer of *A Man and a Woman* is Chairman of the Board of the Seven Arts Fund. Michael Bennahum, President of the Fund is a New York investment banker. Claude Frenette, the Fund's Secretary-Treasurer is a senior executive. (He was at one time the Vice-president and General Counsel of Power Corporation of Canada.)

5. When it closed, the public offering of the Seven Arts Fund had sold $4,210,000 worth of units out of a total of $10,000,000. The managers of Seven Arts believe that the length of time required to clear the securities commissions (8 months) was in part responsible for the weak showing; they simply did not have the time to adequately explain this new marketing concept to potential investors. They plan to issue a similar public offering in 1981.

6. $4,500 returned for each $5,000 purchase plus $3,000 guaranteed future income.

7. $2,135 returned for each $5,000 purchase plus $3,000 guaranteed future income.

8. Producer's Gross is all revenues from the exploitation of a film after deducting the costs of distribution and exhibition. Producer's Gross is more than "Net Revenue" because the latter is calculated only after deduction of all deferred payments in connection with production of the film. Net Revenue figures for the seven Astral films in distribution were not available.

9. Interim financing, or bridge financing, is the money a producer requires to undertake and complete a production. Bridge financers are usually re-paid with money that accrues from public offering or private placement of an issue on a securities market. The money from the sale of units becomes available to the production company upon closure of the offering.

10. The lower-budget ($1 million) Astral production *Being Different* (working title *The Secret Self*) was financed by private placement in 1980.

11. This is not, however, true of all production companies in Quebec. DAL Productions, makers of *Meatballs* (a film which cost $2 million to produce and grossed over $50 million) has since financed 2 films privately – *Happy Birthday to Me* ($3.5 million) and *My Bloody Valentine* ($2.5 million). *Heartaches*, a film budgeted at $4.9 million has also fulfilled its financing requirements privately after being blessed with $2.5 million from the specialists at the Seven Arts Fund.

Competition among the production companies for the $200,000 investor is tough; this money seems to be directed only to companies with a proven track record, or in a case like *Heartaches*, a film that has received seven digit backing from capital pools like the Seven Arts Fund – which supposedly recognizes marketable, high quality film packages when they come along.

As long as companies like DAL produce one money-maker each year, they should be able to maintain a high 'private placement production volume'. If however, one of them should experience problems leading to inordinate delay between principal photography and the film's subsequent completion and release (as was the case with consecutive ABP productions *Crunch* and *Tulips**) that company's ability to raise sufficient interim financing for its next production would be hampered to the extent that it lacks the ability to generate financing internally and/or to secure loans from banking institutions.

**Tulips* is an Astral production whose principal photography was done in the fall of 1979. Because shooting was undertaken with what was later shown to be an incomplete script, re-shooting took place in the fall of 1980. What *Crunch* and *Tulips* have in common are those unforeseen delays between principal photography and release.

12. The AFPL Creative Development Department consists of Sandra Kolber.

13. "Net Revenue" here is Net Revenue as defined in the prospectus of *Hot Touch*. Net revenue is usually the amount received from the exploitation of a film after deduction of deferred payments and all expenses (distributor's fee, etc.) relating to the exploitation of the film.

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Marty Gross

Striking a Magic Combination

by Boyd Neil

In an ambitious attempt to convey one art form through another, filmmaker Marty Gross went to Japan, where he coaxed the great dolls of the ancient Bunraku Theatre to tell their story on film.

photo: Ian Buruma

On location in Japan, Tomao Yoshida manipulates the doll "Chubei," while director Marty Gross lines up the action for shooting

Marty Gross is more than a filmmaker. He is also an artisan and a poet. And never have the three been so merrily partnered as in his latest film **The Lovers' Exile**, soon to be released in art cinemas across the country by Linda Beath's New Cinema.

Gross's first two films, **As We Are** and **Potters At Work** have both won film awards, both in Europe and Canada, and 200 prints of the latter are now in circulation around the world. It was while filming **Potters at Work** in Japan that Gross was approached to consider the country's 300-year-old Bunraku theatre as the subject for his next film — an unlikely subject for a filmmaker, or a potter (Gross's previous vocation).

Boyd Neil is a free-lance writer specializing in theatre, dance and film in Toronto.

photo: Ian Buruma

Japan's Bunraku Theatre is famous for its unique puppetry. Here, master puppeteer Yoshida, and hooded doll handlers bring "Chubei" to life.

This artist's impression depicts the lovers Chubei and Umegawa from the story "Lover's Exile"

photo: Ian Buruma

Integral to the performance are, narrator Oritayu Takemoto, and samisen player Enza Tsurusawa

Little known in the West, the Bunraku theatre consists of lifesize dolls, each of which is manipulated by three seree doll handlers who are visible to the audience. The dolls "act out" tales which are spoken, chanted and sung by a narrator, or joruri. Testimonials to the incomparable power and beauty of the art have come from the likes of Roland Barthes, Sergei Eisenstein, Northrop Frye, Bertolt Brecht, Bertrand Russell and Jean-Louis Barrault.

Despite its many attractions, this particular theatre art seems to be the least suited of them all for adaption to film. The stories are spare and straightforward — the most recent one in the Bunraku repertoire was written in 1875. The art form is, in fact, consciously and gloriously artificial. We see not just the whole, but the parts as well — the dolls, the handlers, the narrator, a structural concept that is the very antithesis of screen realism.

The challenge for Gross in making **The Lovers' Exile** was to transfer Bunraku's artificial form of storytelling to the screen, for a screen audience nurtured on the cinema's *illusion of reality.* "It is recollecting the artifice of storytelling that fascinates me in thinking of this project," Gross explains. "This artifice is symbolized in Bunraku theatre, which is neither puppetry nor live action. Here are men structuring for us a story. On the one side, there is the most extravagant form of emotion (the narrator) and on the other, complete restraint and, ostensibly, non-involvement (the doll handlers). These elements of Bunraku both bring us forward and keep us away. This puts us in an interesting position in relation to the story. It is made more interesting when we are a further step removed by film. We are reminded that a story is a story."

This dizzying concept of the film is matched only by Gross's chutzpah in pulling it off. There was the problem of money, of course, to pay the Bunraku troupe ($50,000) to rent the "biggest studio in the East" — used previously for the filming of **Rashomon** — and for equipment that included the use of "the same camera as Mizoguchi used in some early films." Total budget, $350,000. All Gross's films have been independently financed and produced, so he has done much of the "hustling" himself.

Then there were the complexities of both Japanese society and the world of Bunraku masters. Gross travelled to Japan four times in twelve months to become acquainted with the art of Bunraku and the doll handlers themselves. "They probably didn't trust me at first," he says. "It is a hierarchical society and the men my age in Bunraku are only handling the dolls' feet. They thought of me as a kid, and they are resistant to youth. But I spent a full month in the theatre watching them work for nine hours a day. Then I would go back to talk with them about my plans and report on my progress in raising money and getting good people to work for me. It all came together, so it worked in my favour."

But which of the 118 Bunraku plays to choose? Gross knew he wanted one from the Japanese author Chikamatsu, whose works are now considered classics. And he wanted a play that "dealt with the emotions and situations of everyday life", never questioning seriously whether other people might want to see a more opulent tale of feudal loyalties or samurai warriors. "I wanted the spectacle to be in the construction of the ordinary, not in the tale itself," he says. "I wanted something mundane as the base of the film story, as a contrast to the way in which it is told in Bunraku theatre." So Chikamatsu's *Meido no Hikyaku (The Courier to Hell)* became the slightly truncated film tale which Gross called **The Lovers' Exile.**

The story he chose is filled with clichés, transformed by the doll handlers' magic into subtle moral and spiritual

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caveats. Chubei, a young manager of couriers, falls in love with the prostitute Umgawa. In order to free his lover from the teahouse, and pay back his friend (Machiemon), Chubei steals some money meant for a samurai. When he and Umgawa run away, their fate is sealed; they will eventually be caught and executed. But the lovers pay a final, sad visit to Chubei's father, who debates whether or not to turn his son over to the police and conform to his duty as a citizen. As the narrator intones "Shared blood, a source of anguish," the father lets them escape.

With the story chosen and the financing in place, Gross moved into the studio with a crew of 60, including his cameraman from **Potters at Work**, Hideak Koboyashi, and the Bunraku entourage composed of the doll handlers, their hairdressers, properties people, set designers and those who were to care for the dolls backstage — 30 in all. The filming took 20 days. But the first three days were spent recording the narrator, shooting his scenes, then doing a video of the whole three-hour play. (The film is about half that length.) This complete run-through was necessary because the narrator had to perform the whole play in one shot; he couldn't be expected to turn his extravagant emotional energies on and off at the crew's whim. Although Gross could give specific direction to the doll handlers, he had to decide in advance what scenes with the narrator he wanted on camera so that they could be done in sync. The dolls were actually filmed to a sound recording of the narration.

Gross decided to film the play from a straightforward, frontal viewpoint, because he could regulate the movements of the doll handlers, sometimes adjusting the traditional patterns of Bunraku to suit the needs of the camera. Consequently, he had little difficulty with the film's visuals. When it came to the complex task of cutting the film, he had the services of the Japanese composer, Toru Takemitsu. Still, the narration was a problem. "Because the narrator never stops," Gross explains, "it is extremely difficult to cut — especially when you don't speak Japanese. Takemitsu had to be brought to Canada to work out natural transitions in the narrator's voice."

Major cuts were necessary because the final film version of *Meido no Hikyaku* is only half the length of the original play. The translation was the work of Donald Ritchie, a major critic of Japanese films. He and Gross worked together on the subtitles, but Gross was responsible for their placement — in a black border at the bottom of the film frame. This added a final, unique dimension to the film, which itself attempts to frame the "universal picture" of theatre.

The TV version of **The Lovers' Exile** has already been sold to a number of European stations following the film's successful screenings at the Venice and Edinburgh film festivals. In the introduction that will accompany it, written and presented by the brilliant French actor Jean-Louis Barrault, Barrault states that "The art of theatre has always drawn its vitality from popular imagination. Sometimes imagination uses puppets, sometimes storytellers." Sometimes, Barrault might now wish to add, in view of **The Lovers' Exile,** this imagination uses artisans and poets disguised as filmmakers. □

BOOKSHELF

by george l. george

Publications of the British Film Institute, distributed by N.Y. Zoetrope (31 E. 12 St., NYC 10003), consider various challenging aspects of cinema. **Women In Film Noir**, edited by Ann Kaplan, deals with unconventional, strong female characters featured in thrillers of the '40s and '50s ($8.25). In **Pictures of Reality**, Terry Lovell views realism in the context of esthetics, audience involvement and politics ($8.75). **Gays and Film**, edited by Richard Dyer, surveys stereotypical and forthright presentations of homosexuals in recent films ($6.25). In **Traditions of Independence**, Don Macpherson evokes British cinema of the '30s, when individuals and groups agitated for movies reflecting their alternate lifestyles ($11.50).

In **Hungarian Cinema Today: History Must Answer To Man**, Graham Petrie appraises knowledgeably activities and prospects of that country's film establishment. Focus is primarily on directors — Miklos Jancso, Istvan Gaal, Zoltan Fabri, Marta Meszaros and others — whose innovations in style, themes and esthetics brought world attention to Hungary's cinematic achievements (N.Y. Zoetrope $8.95).

Sports on television are celebrated in **The Athlete** by an outstanding technician and expert, Robert Riger, whose striking cinematography, sensitive drawings and probing interviews, notably during his coverage of the 1980 Winter Olympics, were the star attraction of the ABC-TV newscasts. Illustrated with 80 pages of color stills and 160 pages of black-and-white, this superb volume embodies the effectiveness and immediacy of sports reporting on live television (Simon & Schuster $24.95).

In a revised edition of his classical text, **Motion Pictures: The Development of An Art**, A.R. Fulton expands his penetrating study of dramatic theories and genres, probing the adaptation to film of works from other media — novels and plays — in order to define pragmatically the essential nature of cinema (U. of Oklahoma Press $14.95).

William Miller's **Screenwriting for Narrative Film and Television** is a stimulating guide to creative writing for two closely related, yet distinct, media. It expertly surveys narrative techniques, structure, theme, dialogue, settings and characterizations in a perceptive text suitable for both beginning and advanced writers (Hastings House $16.95).

Squire Fridell's **Acting in Television Commercials for Fun and Profit** is an effective manual, offering valuable advice to performers on preparation for a job and the job itself in a thoroughly professional and practical manner (Harmony/Crown $12.95/7.95).

A collection of 32 historically representative books on cinema, issued by Garland Publishers, Inc. (136 Madison Ave., NYC 10016), include several significant screenplays of landmark films. Let us note particularly **The Private Life of Henry VIII** by Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis, **The Mighty Barnum** by Gene Fowler and Bess Meredith, and **Jew Suss** by Arthur Rawlinson and Dorothy Farnum ($14 ea.).

Also in the collection are two notable anthologies of screenplays assembled by John Gassner and Dudley Nichols, **Best Film Plays of 1943-44** and **Best Film Plays of 1945** ($25 ea.), and Lorraine Noble's **Four Star Scripts** ($16). They contain some 25 screenplays, including such classics as *It Happened One Night, Spellbound, Wilson, The Lost Weekend, Double Indemnity* and *Casablanca*. The full set of 32 volumes costs $535, or $400 if payment accompanies order.

For Reference and Research

The revised edition of Ephraim Katz's **The Film Encyclopedia** establishes it as the best among the elite of authoritative reference works on movie matters. A well-rounded text, thoroughly documented and remarkably accurate, its 7000 plus entries constitute an all-inclusive survey of personalities, history, industry, genres, techniques and esthetics of the medium and its various ramifications in a literate and lively style that stimulates research and rewards perusal (Crowell $29.95).

Victor S. Navasky's **Naming Names**, an objective in-depth study of the Hollywood witch hunts of the McCarthy era, focuses on the victims of the blacklisting practices and the informers who fueled the investigators' blind zeal. Personal interviews, congressional probes and FBI reports clearly bring out the basic futility of the endeavor and the gratuitously tragic consequences for many of its targets (Viking $15.95).

A complete pictorial and statistical record of films released in the U.S. during the previous year, John Willis' **Screen World 1980** offers in 10,000 entries and 1000 pictures a comprehensive view of films and personalities (Crown $15.95).

Cobbett Steinberg's well-documented reference books, **Film Facts** and **TV Facts**, offer abundant and specific data on the industrial, artistic and personal aspects of these twin media, supplying useful statistics, lists and surveys for research and study (Facts On File $17.95 ea.).

Written by noted experts and edited by Don Dohler, **Stop Motion Animation** provides detailed information on materials and techniques involved in achieving professional results in the use of scale models and optical effects (Cinema Enterprises, 12 Moray Court, Baltimore, MD 21236; $5.50).

Nearly 200 films and tapes are included in **An International Guide to Computer Animation Films**, a directory compiled by Rick Speer and Bill & Ruth Kovacs. Entries in 40 categories are listed and described by title, and cross-referenced by filmmaker, subject and source. (Animation Research, Box 2651, Seattle WA 98111.)

French View of Avant-Garde

A special issue of the French quarterly CinémAction considers the world-wide phenomenon of independent filmmaking. **Cinémas d'avant-garde** deals with the trends and achievements of esthetically experimental and politically militant movies. Edited by Guy Hennebelle and Raphael Bassan, this broadly based study reflects the contradictory and coexisting notions of film being used to transform itself or to transform society. Filmmakers and scholars from 25 countries report on the work done in their areas, testifying to the extraordinary vitality and distinctiveness of the revolutionary spirit in cinema (CinémAction, 106 Bd. Saint Denis, 92400 Courbevoie, France; F45).

FILM REVIEWS

David Cronenberg's **Scanners**

A man is rambling aimlessly through a shopping mall. He does not look healthy. His clothes are ragged, his eyes pale blue and watery. He pauses by tables, scavenging for food. Two middle-class women watch him with distaste, commenting on his appearance. A minute later, one of the women is writhing in what seems to be an epileptic seizure. Two minutes later, the vagrant has been captured and sedated by men in dark suits.

The man is Cameron Vale (Stephen Lack), and he is a Scanner. He is the last hope of ConSec, the security agency which has captured him. The film, by David Cronenberg, is perhaps the most extraordinary science fiction-horror film of the past five years. The story, of artificially created telepaths and their potential war with humanity, of the internecine power struggles within the Scanner underground, of shattered families and lost illusions, is a typical Cronenberg fable examining the effects of science gone wrong. Essentially, it is the same story that Cronenberg has been telling since his student days; but this should not be construed as a negative factor. The fact that Cronenberg continually mines the myth of the Frankenstein monster should no more be held against him than, say, Mazursky's obsession with romance among the liberal bourgeoisie is held against him.

For with the essential death of the socially relevant film (or its relegation to television and to special events like **The China Syndrome** – one need only check *Variety* for proof), Cronenberg is virtually the only popular artist who continues to examine the effects of biomedical research on the individual. As the years pass following the release of each of his films, they become less the bizarre imaginings of a renegade science major and more the prescient news bulletins from the not-too-distant future: consider carcinogenic cosmetics (**Crimes of the Future**) or prosthetic organs and skin

In an extra-sensory battle that literally blows his mind, this Scanner is overpowered by fellow Scanner Michael Ironside

Scanners

d./sc. David Cronenberg **exec.p.** Pierre Danid, Victor Solnicki **p.** Claude Heroux **d.o.p.** Mark Irwin **art d.** Carol Spier, Claude Benoit (1st ass't.) **sd.** Don Cohen **ed.** Ron Sanders **mus.** Howard Shore **p.man.** Don Buchsbaum **sp. efx. co-ord.** Gary Zeller **sp. efx. consult.** Henry Peirig **sp. make-up consult.** Dick Smith **sp. make-up** Tom Schwartz, Chris Walas, Stephan Dupuis **sculptor** Tom Coulter **cost. des.** Delphine White, Blanche Bolleau (asst.) **make-up** Brigitte McCaughry **hair** Constant Natale **a.d.** Jim Kaufman (1st), Mike Williams (2nd), Anne Murphy (3rd) **unit man.** Jean Savard **asst. cam.** Robin Miller (1st), Gregory Villeneuve (2nd) **vid. cam.** Robert Morin **dresser** Renee April **const. superv.** Clause Simard **art dept. admin.** Maurice Tremblay **set dresser** Peter Bray **loc. man.** Christine Burt **gaffer** Jock Brandis **best boy** Claude Langlois **elect** Ashand Shaw **key grip** Francois Dupere **casting** Stewart Aikens, Danny Hausman **p. sec.** Danielle Rohrbach **asst. to p.** Kim Obrist **unit pub.** Kay Gray **l.p.** Stephen Lack, Jennifer O'Neill, Patrick McGoohan, Lawrence Dane, Charles Shamata, Adam Ludwig, Michael Ironside, Victor Desy Mavor Moore, Robert Silverman, Louis Del Grande, Lee Broker, Terry Coady Steve Michaels, Malcolm Nelthrope, Don Buchsbaum, David Patrick, Neil Affleck, Babs Gadbois, Griff Brewer, Karen Fullerton, Victor Knight, Elijah Siegler, Tom Kovacs, Harriet Stein, Rollie Nincheri, Mikhail Berkut, Danny Silverman, Louise Draper, Bob Peters, Fred Doederlein, Graham Bachelor, Elizabeth Mudry, Jerome Tiberghien, Barry Blake, Sonny Forbes, Lee Murray, Dean Hagopian, Alex Stevens Danny Hausman, Ken Umland, Anthony Sherwood, Nick Kilbertus, Kimberly McKeever, Geza Kovacks, Time Webber, Sam Stone, Domenico Fiore **p.c.** Filmplan International (1980) **dist.** New-World Mutual (Can), Avco-Embassy (U.S.) **col.** 35mm **running time** 105 min.

grafts which absorb the body into their own private ecology (**Shivers** and **Rabid**), or modes of psychotherapy so extreme that the stress created alters physiological systems (**The Brood**). None of these seem impossible. Some of them have happened.

Yet Cronenberg's scientific metaphysics alone would not be enough without his marked ability as a filmmaker. His movies are scary, and in their extremity have scared off many of the critics who refuse to recognize quality in the horror film. They have especially frightened the timid upholders of good taste and moderation. In his now famous review, Marshall Delaney called **Shivers** "the most repulsive movie I've ever seen." Exactly. David Cronenberg's movies are definitely not nice. But the blame cannot be laid on a convenient knife-wielding psychopath. Instead, his films force us to confront the stranger in the mirror, the body which faces little better than decay, disease and death.

Whereas Cronenberg's earlier films were about the effects of the body on the brain, his most recent — **The Brood**, and now **Scanners** — are concerned with the reverse.

The Scanners are a group of highly powerful telepaths and telekineticists. ConSec, in a program led by Dr. Ruth (Patrick McGoohan), has attempted to use the Scanners for intelligence. The Scanners, however, have defected and formed their own organization around the eldest, Darryl Revok (Michael Ironside). Faced with the possibility of a Scanner war on humanity, Ruth pulls his secret weapon, Cameron Vale — who has been living the life of a derelict, unable to deal with the world because of his inability to shut off the voices in his head. Dosed with Ephemerol, the drug which puts the scanning powers under control, Vale learns of what he is and what his mission will be. In search of Revok's organization, he discovers that the underground, led by Kim Obrist (Jennifer O'Neill), has organized itself into a counter group against Revok's organization. To divulge more of the plot would only reduce the pleasures of Cronenberg's labyrinthine narrative; so, let us simply say that those who have been following Cronenberg's work for the past several years will catch the drift more quickly than those who are unfamiliar with it.

Someone once remarked that the ideal 'horror director' would have Cronenberg's ideas and DePalma's style. **Scanners**, however, is a quantum stylistic leap for Cronenberg as a director. It is certainly his most designed film; and full credit should be given to art director Carol Spier and cinematographer Mark Irwin (both of whom worked on **The Brood**), who have given the film a cold, spectral look, filled with the artifacts of a high-technology society – the florescent tones of the shopping mall where Vale is captured, the metal and concrete of ConSec headquarters, and the eerie nightworld of the Montreal streets where one of the film's most satisfying set-pieces takes place.

The set-pieces, never before a Cronenberg strength, are extraordinary. The scene in the sculptor's (Robert Silverman) grotesquely crowded studio where Vale fends off four of Revok's agents, or the final, fatal confrontation between Vale and Revok, have the sort of split-second precision one associates with a Hitchcock. Unlike DePalma or John Carpenter, one never feels that he is indulging in technique-for-technique's-sake exercises in bravura camera movement.

The result is a film which is very stylish and very frightening, yet without the maddening narrative holes that are so distracting in a DePalma film.

Unlike much of Cronenberg's work, it is very well-acted. Often, particularly in **Shivers** and **Rabid**, one begins to grit one's teeth whenever a bit player opens his mouth. **Scanners** has a solid cast, with at least one performance that should be considered when the 1981 Genies are handed out. Steven Lack, previously known for his free-wheeling raps in Frank Vital's **Montreal Main** and Allan Moyle's **The Rubber Gun**, plays a solid Cameron Vale, with few of the mannerisms of his earlier roles. It is difficult to imagine another actor who could simultaneously suggest both the vagrant wanderer, with a head filled with other's thoughts, and the cool exploiter of his own astonishing gifts. It's largely those pale blue eyes, at once translucent and concealing, that convey the character's shifting power and hint at the massive reserves that lurk invisibly beneath his placid surface.

Patrick McGoohan gives a professional performance, buried behind Dr. Ruth's greying beard and horn-rimmed glasses. His is the Doctor Frankenstein role, that of a character who errs not through hubris, but who merely gets much, much more than he's bargained for — like the plastic surgeons in **Rabid**, the parasitologist in **Shivers** and the psychotherapist in **The Brood**, he unwittingly creates monsters that turn on him.

The rest of the cast is quite good, particularly Michael Ironside as Revok, and Robert Silverman as the sculptor who insists that his art keeps him sane, when it is all too obvious that it doesn't.

Scanners is most interesting on thematic grounds. One of the most exasperating elements of DePalma's **The Fury** was that it's most interesting subtext — the potential for species war — was completely ignored. **Scanners**, in a way, can be seen as the subtext of the DePalma film, making explicit what the earlier film chose to ignore. The deeply ambiguous climax of the film (with a new generation of Scanners about to be born), demonstrates Cronenberg's willingness to play with the implications of his ideas, and allow them

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to continue to an open-ended manner. It also marks the return of the director's essentially apocalyptic vision (in *Film Comment*, Cronenberg remarked that he didn't want to see an apocalypse in his lifetime – yet **Shivers**, **Rabid** and **Scanners** all move in that direction.)

For many years, a small group has been touting Cronenberg as Canada's finest, most visionary director. Partially, this is in reaction to maudlin, much-loved memoirs like **Lies My Father Told Me** and **Who Has Seen The Wind**, and partially, it was because anyone that the upholders of good taste and high culture (e.g. Robert Fulford, Clyde Gilmour) reacted against so strongly could not be all bad. But with the release of **Scanners**, there is no need for defensiveness. Cronenberg is our greatest director, and **Scanners** should be the first in a long line of commercial and artistic masterpieces.

John G. Harkness

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Bob Clark's **Tribute**

Tribute is the story of an irrepressible life-of-the-party who refuses to confront the grim horror of cancer for fear that he will exit this life with not a belly laugh but a whimper. It is also, sadly, a film that for the most part refuses to take itself seriously, given the gravity of its topic.

The death-of-a-clown concept is pregnant with dramatic possibility, but screenwriter Bernard Slade (**Same Time Next Year**), and TV's *The Partridge Family*, has little mind for the untidy aspects of cancer. A joke for him is like a drink for an alcoholic: he does not know how to joke moderately, and so goes on long gratuitous gag-jags that wreak havoc with the film.

Jack Lemmon is a New York PR man with an endless supply of jokes and friends. Three minutes into the film he is told – sledge hammer to the temple – that he has cancer. His son (Robby Benson), an earnest, bespectacled sort, visits him for the summer. Their conflicting worldviews, along with the question of mortality, become, ostensibly, the meat of the film.

But then the magic lure of 'comedy' presents itself. And Slade, seemingly, has no will power. Vaudeville schtiks abound. Every ringing doorbell becomes an opportunity for Lemmon to drop his pants, cross his eyes, and go into yet another daffy bit. If it is Slade's fault that the film is loaded down with so much sitcom material, it is to director Bob Clark's (**Murder By Decree**) discredit that Slade, and star Lemmon are allowed to indulge themselves in such shameful burlesque.

At times it is difficult to figure out where the schtiks stop and the film begins. Sandwiched between one scene, where Lemmon throws a testimonial party for a down-on-her-luck hooker (Gail Garnett), and another where Lemmon jumps out of a door as a fertile yellow chicken, there is the scene where young Benson meets up with his love interest, Kim Cattrall (a vacuous model type who could not act her way out of a fashion supplement). Benson and Cattrall are sharing a pastrami and some laughs, on what appears to be a nice summer's afternoon, when out of nowhere the skies open, rain falls, and they are forced inside for a romantic fireside picnic — just like in the movies. **Tribute** lurches forward in similar stock

Scottie (Jack Lemmon) pokes fun at Jud (Robby Benson) as the two struggle to understand one another

scenes, as if the film's makers learned how to make a drama not by observing life, but by watching TV.

We know early on in the film that this is not going to be an unflinching tragedy in the Eugene O'Neill style, but rather, "a deft blend of laughter and tears" Neil Simon carbon. When Lemmon is told, behind closed doors, that he has cancer, we cannot hear his response. At the time, the scene appears to be a nice touch, a suggestion that there is no adequate response to death. But later, when Lemmon's treatment for cancer is depicted in a montage of still photographs, a more likely explanation becomes apparent. Neither Slade nor Clark want any part of the true horror they are dealing with. Cancer is in the film merely to gain our sympathy, not our attention.

Slade has provided enough good one-liners to stock a dozen sitcom episodes; and the film's finale, a testimonial to Lemmon, with Benson and ex-wife Lee Remick (the film's best performance) in attendance, is effective melodrama. But good, lightweight entertainment should be breezy, and Lemmon tackles his every scene like a long-out-of-work actor, pulling all his tricks in his one big scene. There is no pace to his performance. His miscalculated energy unbalances the film and makes it an often enervating chore to watch.

Lemmon's manic work in **Tribute** comes as a surprise. In the '70s, in films like **Save The Tiger** and **The China Syndrome**, Lemmon portrayed the Sick-Soul-of-the-Establishment — the good man fallen victim to the unscrupulousness of the times. His role as Scottie Templeton here marks a return to the Clown-in-the-Grey-Flannel-Suit roles he perfected in the late '50s and early '60s (**Some Like It Hot, The Apartment**). But whereas Lemmon invested those roles with a beguiling comic energy, his performance here is at times almost senile in its lack of control. Only the fact that we know he is dying keeps the film from flying apart during the early sequences when Lemmon's performance veers most dangerously out of control.

As to whether or not **Tribute** "addresses the Canadian experience" — or some such CFDC homily — the film is no more Canadian than Herbert Ross's next popcorn muncher. The film's establishing shots are New York, the beer is Bud, and the principal actors are all American. I am sure that producer Garth Drabinsky, screenwriter Slade, and director Clark — all Canadians — never intended to make anything other than a Hollywood film in Canada. They have succeeded. Good for them; it's a big club. My only hope is that the next time they paint Toronto up to be New York, they seal all the holes. There is, in **Tribute**, one reference to Canada (a mistake I hope), where Benson complains to his father about a hooker the ol' man set him up with: "And when I got back to Canada I found out I had the clap." So Canada is rendered in the eyes of the world as an exotic venereal disease clinic.

Stephen Cole

Tribute

d. Bob Clark **p.** Joel B. Michaels, Garth H. Drabinsky **sc.** Bernard Slade **exec.p.** The Turman-Foster Co. & Richard S. Bright **assoc.p.** Hannah Hempstead **d.o.p.** Reginald H. Morris, csc **p.design** Trevor Williams **ed.by** Richard Halsey, ace **mus.** Ken Wannberg **based on stage play by** Bernard Slade **p.man.** Gerry Arbeid **p.co-ord./asst.p.man.** Suzanne Lore **editors** Ian McBride, Stan Cole **asst.ed.** Richard Cadger **asst. to p.** Margaret Livingston, Christine Pittel **a.d.** Ken Goch (1st), Don Brough (2nd), Alan Goluboff (3rd) **art d.** Reuben Freed, Charles Dunlop (asst.) **superv. set dec.** Rondi Johnson **prop mas.** Charles Dunlop, Dennis Kirkham (asst.) **cost. design.** Suzanne Grace **leadman** Robert James **asst.set dec.** Stan Conley **cam.op.** Matt Tundo **asst. cam.** Gordon Langevin (1st), Stewart Miller (2nd) **key grip** Ron Gillham **gaf.** Chris Holmes **boom** Stephen Switzer **best boys** Glen Goodchild, Tony Eldrige **grip** Wayne Goodchild **elec.** John Spurrell, Brian Woodruff **sd.ed.** Patrick Drummond, Kenneth Heeley-Ray, Wayne Griffin **asst.sd.ed.** Kelly Hall, Brenda Ashbee **sd.mix** David Lee, cf.ss **re-rec.** Joe Grimaldi, Austin Grimaldi, Dino Pigat **orchestrations** Gordon Langford **mus. superv. by** Len Engel **make-up** Ken Brooke **hair** James Brown **ward** Larry Wells (master), Mary McLeod (asst.) Debra Starr (asst.) **sc.superv.** Sandra Ulosevich-Marley **cast** Clare Walker (Canada), B.C.I. Casting (N.Y.) **extra cast** Weist-Barron (Can.), Michael Kara Casting (N.Y.) **unit pub.** Lynda Friendly **gen. op** Cliff West **PanaGlide op.** Graig E. Di Bona **transp. co-ord.** Don Retzer **stills** Curt Kaufman **p.a.** Rick Watts, David Daniels **researcher** Peter Cresswell **p. compt.** Heather McIntosh **p. acct.** Lisa King, Lorraine Valentine **asst. acct.** Lyn Lucibello **scenic artist** Geunter Bartlik **head painter** Willi Holst, Fred Geringer (asst.) **p. sec.** Francie Greenspoon **craft service** Brad Blackwood **construc. superv.** William Collett **head carp.** Alfred Sutton, Weits Jekel (2nd) **carp.** Bill Privett, Stanley Young **p. laborers** James Duffy, Bert King **drivers** Gary Flannagan, Jim Kennedy, Bill Jackson, John Oliphant, Fred Ionson, Joe Muscat **l.p.** Jack Lemmon, Robby Benson, Lee Remick, Colleen Dewhurst, John Marley, Kim Cattrall, Gale Garnett, Teri Keane, Rummy Bishop, John Dee, Bob Windsor, Eileen Lehman, Andrew Foot, Trevor Daley, Sid Smith, Jennifer Goldie, Bill McMann, Gaylyn Britton, Peter Peers, Ron Marino, Tony Powers, Bob Scarantino, Michael Monet **p.c.** Kudos Film Productions (1980) **col.** 35mm **running time** 125 min. **dist.** Pan-Canadian Film Distributors

George Kaczender's Agency

In his books, *Subliminal Seduction* and *Media Sexploitation*, journalism professor and media watchdog Wilson Bryan Key has postulated the theory that the mass media, and especially advertising, uses subliminal messages — those which are received only at the subconscious level — in a manner which poses a serious social threat. Obviously, there is ample material in this concept for a solid thriller of a movie. **Agency**, unfortunately, is not that movie.

Like **Suzanne**, this Robert Lantos Stephen Roth production, directed by George Kaczender (**In Praise of Older Women**), is plagued by an inability to follow up a strong beginning. The theme of subliminal seduction is introduced in the very first shot of the film, in which a standard pan up the outside of an office building is intercut by momentary shots of a demonic figure. Then there is a cut to a frenetic, dimly lit disco number (the only time when Lewis Furey's sardonic music is properly used), in which the demonic also figures. The dance number turns out to be a deodorant commercial, that is being watched by the head of the advertising agency of Quinn, Porter and Stripe. The final segment of this sequence shows the firm's enigmatic boss, Ted Quinn (Robert Mitchum), pronouncing the garish, incomprehensible ad, "perfect."

But after this display of derring-do, and a flashy animated title sequence, **Agency** begins to plod its predictable way. We meet Phillip Morgan (Lee Majors), and his doctor girlfriend Brenda Wilcox (Valerie Perrine), by way of an irrelevant scene of him jogging through the streets of a wintry New York that looks suspiciously like Montreal. Morgan is upset that Quinn, who has recently become a power in the advertising business in spite of his lack of experience in the field, has been replacing staff. He has also been instituting new campaigns, without consulting Morgan — who is, after all, Q.P. & S.'s creative department head.

Morgan's suspicions of Quinn grow, when his friend, Sam Goldstein, who has been pestering him with tales of sinister goings-on at the agency, is found dead in his refrigerator. Then, an incriminating tape of Goldstein's, which Morgan has left in girlfriend Brenda's safekeeping, is stolen from her at knifepoint by a pair of thugs. After the thugs make an attempt on Morgan's life, he uncovers Quinn's plan.

It's double trouble for Brenda (Valerie Perrine), as hitmen Jones (Gary Reineke, left) and Peters (Michael Kirby) threaten to kill her, if...

Quinn has subverted a local election in Arizona, by using subliminal messages under the deodorant ad, as a prelude to the rigging of the presidential contest.

This should be exciting stuff, but George Kaczender and Noel Hynd, who adapted Paul Gottlieb's novel, conspire to make it otherwise. The plot is let slip more than once, so that the director can linger on the kitschy details of the agency and its operation. Expository scenes, like the one in which Morgan explains subliminals to Brenda, using Key's classic images-in-the ice cubes example, make the film drag, and seem longer than its 86 minutes.

Matters such as characterization go by the board very early; only Saul Rubinek — as the frenetic Goldstein — really tries to achieve anything beyond the barest caricature. Lee Majors seems to have been cast in the lead for his name — how fast time flies — for the part requires someone who can appear thoughtful and reflective, hardly Majors' strong suits as an actor. Valerie Perrine has demonstrated, in **The Magician of Lublin** and **Can't Stop The Music**, that she can rise above some pretty low material; but even she has no chance to make anything of her part. For all that she is required to do, Alexandra Stewart, who plays Quinn's

Agency

d. George Kaczender **p.** Robert S. Lantos **exec.p.** Stephen J. Roth **assoc.p.** Robert Baylis **a.d.** Charles Braive, Daniel Hausman, Pedro Gandol**sc.** Noel Hynd, from the novel by Paul Gottlieb **cont.** France Boudreau, Linda Browne **d.o.p.** Miklos Lente **cam.op.** Al Smith **focus puller** Yves Drapeau **clapper/loader** Michel Girard **stills** Attila Dory, Emilio Lari **ed.** George Kaczender, Peter Wintonick **sd.op.** Richard Lightstone **boom** Jim Thompson **sd.ed.** Ken Heeley-Ray, Monika Dorfman **re-rec.** Joseph Grimaldi **mus.** Lewis Furey **p.design** Bill Brodie **asst.art.d.** Alicia Grunsky, Alfred Benson **animation** Ryan Larkin, Ida Eva Zielinska, Jeanne Sanderson (co-ord.) **choreog.** Jo Jo Smith **cost.** Olga Dmitrov, William Jobe (for Valerie Perrine) **make-up** Michel Dion, Chantal Ethier, Jim Kali (for Lee Majors) **gaf.** Claude Simard **best boy** Charles Hughes **elec.** Gerald Proulx **key grip** Jean Daoust **grips** Normand Simpson, Pierre Charpentier **hair** David Beckett, Constant Natale **props** David Phillips, Peter Bowker (asst.) **animal trainer** Michael Klingbell **stunt co-ord.** Eric Cord **p.superv.** Wendy Grean **unit p.man.** Danny Rossner **acc't.** Carole Legault **bookkeepers** Suzanne Benoit, Leona Abrams **pub.** David Novek, Lana Iny, Joy Berger **cast.** Canadian Casting Associates **l.p.** Robert Mitchum, Lee Majors, Valerie Perrine, Alexandra Stewart, Saul Rubinek, Colonel Pierre Sevigny, P.C., George Touliatos, Franz Russell, Hayward Morse, Gary Reineke, Michael Kirby, Anthony Parr, Jonathan Welsh, Hugh Webster, Donald Davis, Walter Massey, Marilyn Gardner, Eric Donkin, Jean-Louis Boutin, Elizabeth Mudry, David Thompson, George Zeeman, Lee Murray, Catherine Veneri, Margo Dionne, Martin Kevin, Malcolm Nelthrope, Annette Terri, Roberta Boulduc, Shawna Sexsmith, Michael Klingbell, "Maria" **p.c.** Movie corp III-RSL Films (1979) **col.** Eastmancolor, 35mm **running time** 86 min. **dist.** Ambassador Films, Vivafilms (Quebec)

chief lieutenant, might as well have mailed in her performance. Perhaps she did.

Except for Michael Kingbell's cat Maria, and former Canadian cabinet minister Pierre Sevigny, who plays Quinn's anonymous Air Force bigwig boss (neither have any lines), the only actor in **Agency** to emerge with any dignity is Robert Mitchum. His heavy-lidded casual style has enabled him to survive his fair share of turkeys — like the 1978 version of **The Big Sleep**. Here, that style works in his favour amidst the sound and the fury signifying nothing. Mitchum is enough of a professional to hide the contempt he probably felt for the project. Still, nothing he can do explains why such a sharp operator as Quinn would hire as his hitmen the two coke-snorting morons (Quinn's own description) played with Grade A ham by Gary Reineke, looking jaundiced, and Michael Kirby, looking ill.

What condemns **Agency** to its low-calibre fate as a film (its Canadian identity is not even an issue), is that the producers and director overlooked, in their cynicism, one crucial matter. In order for a story of conspiracy and paranoia to work, there must be some kind of ethical structure inherent in the organization under scrutiny. And the nominal hero has to be sympathetically portrayed — good examples being **The Hospital, Three Days of The Condor, All The President's Men, Network, Coma** and **...And Justice For All** to varying degrees. Although it *is* possible to make a thriller without such ethics, or a sympathetic hero — as in Francis Coppola's **The Conversation** — there is no indication that the makers of **Agency** believe enough in what they are saying to succeed. Nor do they possess the necessary wit and energy to convincingly fake it.

Paul Costabile

Tackling the demons of insomnia in **One of Those Nights**

One of Those Nights

Witty, fast-paced and unpretentious, **One of Those Nights** is a breath of fresh air from the genre of films about dance.

Much of the credit for this little gem should go to Gina Lori Reily, who choreographed and performed the dance, entitled "Sleeper," that is the subject of this film. Performed to quick-tempo '30's and '40's jazz, this most unusual dance uses a bed as a dance floor. Reily dances under the covers, on top of the bed, beside the bed and, of course, ends up by falling asleep, as the sun peeks up over the horizon, on the floor beside the bed.

The filmmakers, John Brooke and John Fremes, should be commended for the style with which they have presented this solo dance performance: a solo human performance requires a very delicate treatment on film, or else the strength of the film medium will overpower it. The filmmakers utilized an imaginative array of camera angles, covering the action from directly overhead to camera-on-the-floor and everything in between — but, primarily, with well-designed static frames. The style of shooting, coupled with the clean, crisp editing has allowed the movement and humour of the performance to translate onto the screen.

One of Those Nights is proof of what can be done when a small budget is combined with a thoughtful approach and a little imagination. Hopefully, this film will open a few doors for these young filmmakers, so we can see more of their ideas on the screen.

Edward Farrar

p./d./ed. John Brooke, John Fremes **choreog. & perf.** Gina Lori Riley **ph.** Robert Holmes **set design** Diane Balsky **p.a.** Sydney Levitt **p.c.** JFB Films, with Sunrise Films Ltd. (1980) **running time** 7 min. **col.** 16 mm.

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Growing Up with Sandy Offenheim

Growing Up With Sandy Offenheim is a new, hour-long, children's film from the Playing With Time production company of Toronto. Billed as a "musical special," it is based on the music of Sandy Offenheim, a suburban mother who transformed those long and tedious hours at home, raising the kids, into songs, and the songs into a string of acclaimed albums which she recorded with the help of her family.

The theme of the film focuses on the trials and tribulations of growing up gracefully. From a child's perspective, **Growing Up** examines such problems as living with adults who speak like babies, dealing with newly arrived baby brothers and sisters who steal all the attention, swallowing a loose tooth, and meeting new people. For each of these situations and dilemmas Sandy Offenheim has a song. The message of the film is double-edged, one that kids of all ages would do well to cut out and stick to the 'fridge door: "Don't be impatient for change to come into your life...and don't be afraid of it when it does."

The strength of the film lies in the way it skillfully accommodates a variety of techniques in presenting its message. The story line focuses on a young boy, who appears to be about ten, writing in his diary. As he pauses to remember, or to look ahead, the film takes off in all its different directions. Animation, dramatization, dance, mime, and a great plasticine nightclub singer all help to make the movie a colourful whirl through the imagination. Director Kit Hood used four cameramen, three animators, three choreographers and two editors in putting it all together. Differences in style and tone are apparent, but the theme of the film allows for this diversity. For this reviewer the dance sequences, filmed at York University and in the Henry Moore exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) were the most exciting and imaginative pieces of filmmaking.

Writing dialogue for children — that sounds *natural* — is no easy task. In places, Amy Jo Cooper's script sounds forced, but for the most part, the young members of the cast work comfortably with it.

Credibility is probably the most intangible and important element in a children's film. In a series of vignettes — that look like they've been lifted from the Mike Douglas Show — Sandy Offenheim and her famous family are presented happily, earnestly, sometimes slightly out of sync, singing one of their songs. Unfortunately, the vignettes make the film a crucial 10 minutes too long, and undermine the simple, childlike sense that the film tries to create.

The first of these appearances almost completely obscures a dance sequence; the number about new places and new faces is an example of silly show-biz; and when 13-year-old Nadine Offenheim is set against a Toronto night skyline and croons at the stars it is definitely too much. It is unfortunate that the person who inspired the film in the first place should also become the source of its only major flaw. Offenheim's songs are charming and meaningful, but they ought to have been kept as a strong base for the film rather than transformed into an obtrusive highlight.

In **Growing Up With Sandy Offenheim**, Playing With Time appears to be taking a giant step toward commercial television programming. They will most likely make it; the film is valuable for the understanding and fun it transmits on the grand scale that it does.

John Brooke

Growing Up with Sandy Offenheim

d. Kit Hood **p.** Linda Schuyler **sc.** Amy Jo Cooper **animation** Leach-Rankin Productions, Neil Warren and Andrew Reid, Patti Stren, Jim Miko, Joan Philips, Mimi Beck, Rosemary Grant **p.man.** John Helliker **d.o.p.** Phil Earnshaw, Len Gilday, Robert New, Jim Aquila **asst.cam.** Ray Lam, Chris Wilson, Lem Ristsoo **sd.** Andy McBrearty, Aerlyn Weissman **key grip** David Hynes **grips** Gerald Parker, David Rain, Carlo Sgnassero, John Trench **props** Gary McLeod **Wardrobe** Brenda Clark **Cont.** Wendy Vincent **ed.** John Bertram, Kit Hood **pub.** Sue A'Court **l.p.** Sandy, Harold, Nadine, and Stephen Offenheim **p.c.** Playing With Time **col.** 16mm **running time** 58 min. **dist.** Magic Lanterns (Toronto)

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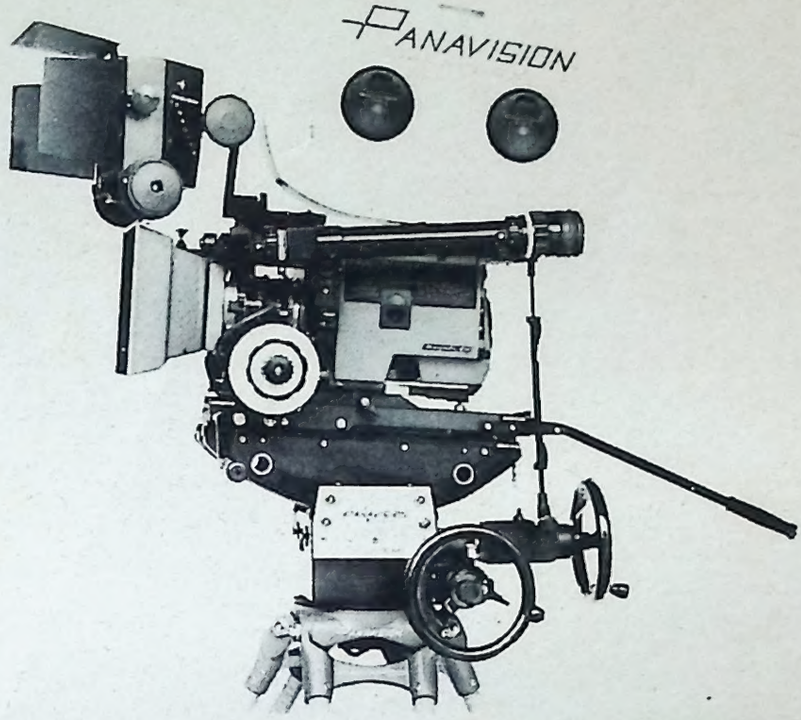

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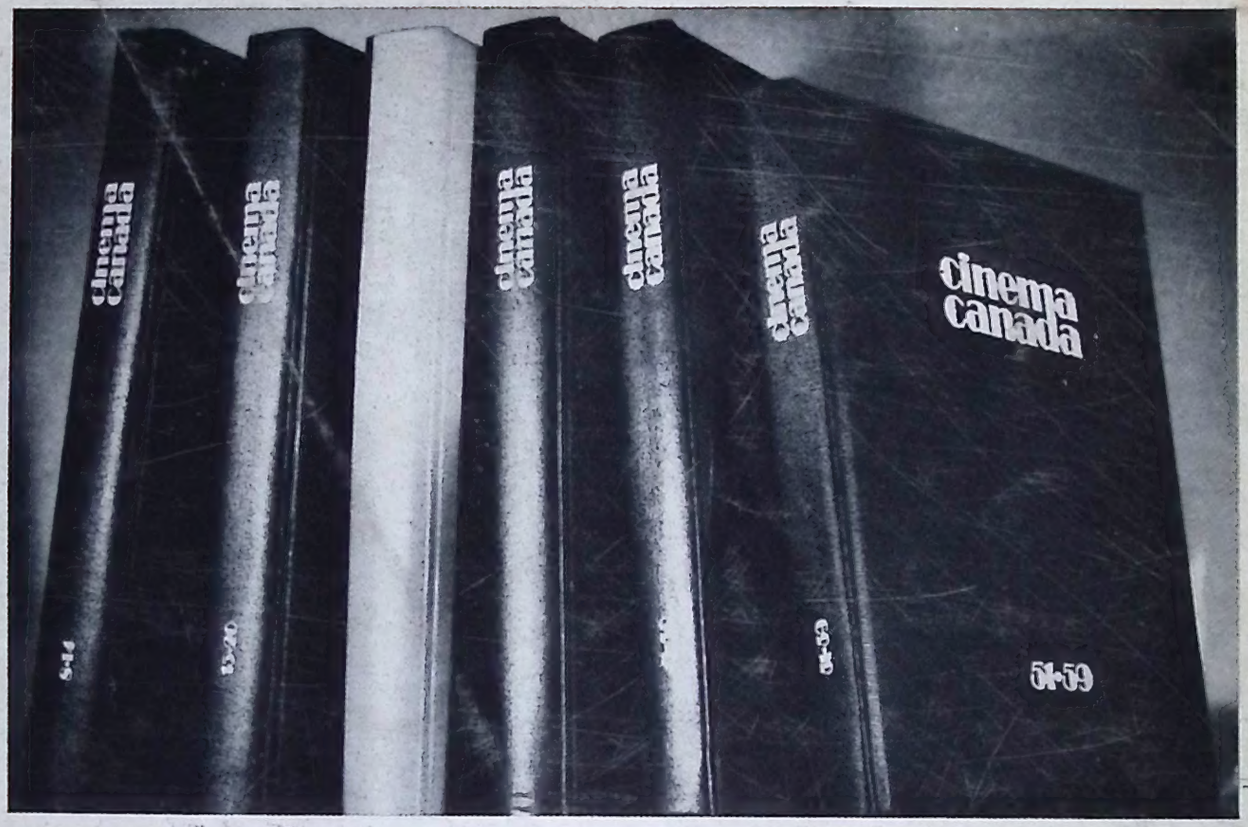

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